*The Acts of Mār Mārī the Apostle*

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# *The Acts of Mār Mārī the Apostle*

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# *The Acts of Mār Mārī the Apostle*

Translated with an Introduction and Notes by

Amir Harrak

Society of Biblical Literature
Atlanta

THE ACTS OF MĀR MĀRĪ THE APOSTLE

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**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Acts of Mar Mari. English.

The acts of Mār Mārī the apostle / translated from Syriac with an introduction and notes by Amir Harrak.

p. cm. -- (Writings from the Greco-Roman world ; 11)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN-13: 978-1-58983-093-6 (paper binding : alk. paper)

ISBN-10: 1-58983-093-8 (paper binding : alk. paper)

1. Mari, Saint. 2. Christian saints--Syria. 3. Christian saints--Iraq. 4. Church history--Primitive and early church, ca. 30-600. I. Harrak, Amir. II. Title. III. Series.

BS2880.M35A3 2005b

270.1'092–dc22

[B] 2005016698

04 05 06 07 08 09 10 11 — 5 4 3 2 1

The book is printed in the United States of America
on recycled, acid-free paper.

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# Abbreviations

## SELECTED ANCIENT SOURCES

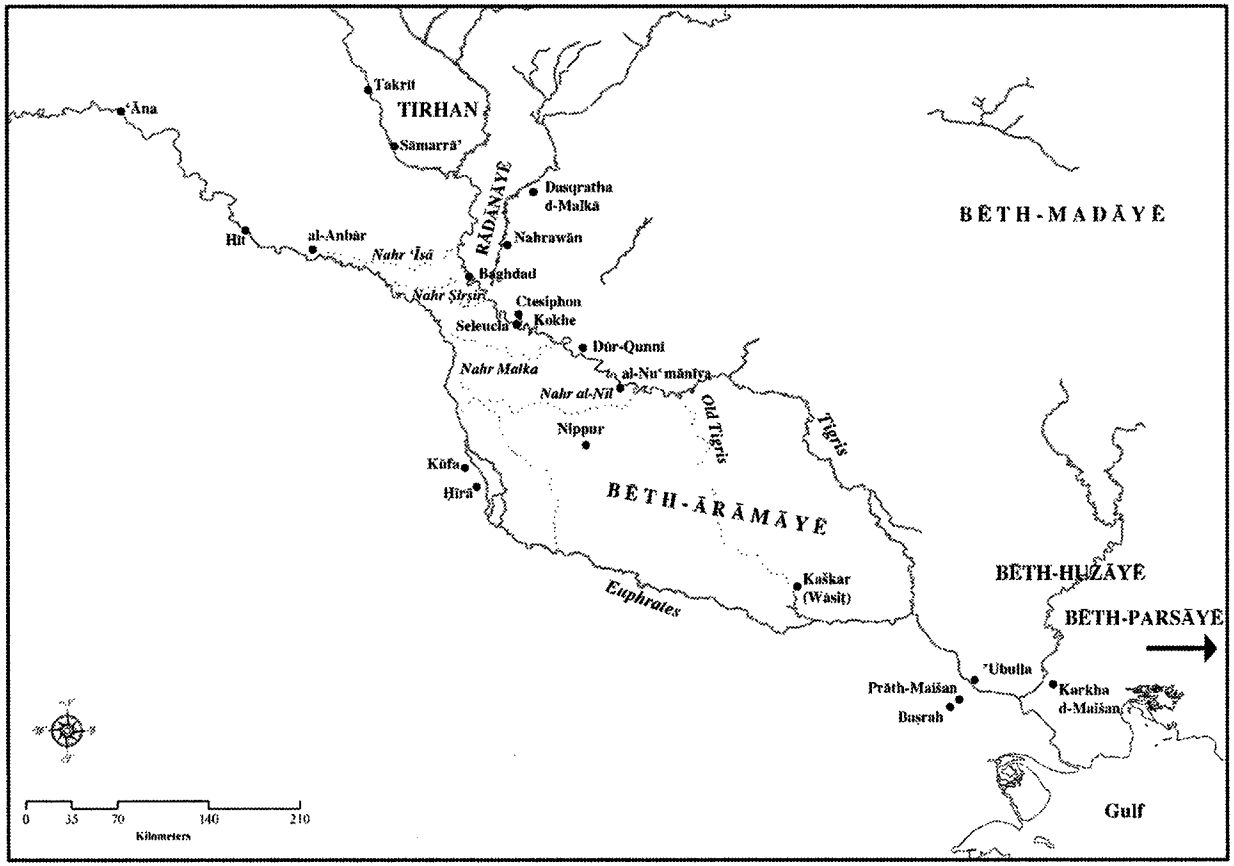
| | |
|---|---|
| Abbeloos, *Acta* | Abbeloos, "Acta Sancti Maris," *AnBoll* 4 (1885): 43–138 |
| *Acts of Thomas* | Klijn, *The Acts of Thomas* |
| *ʿAmr* | Gismondi, *Maris, Amri et Salibae* |
| Bedjan, *Acta* | Bedjan, *Acta Martyrum et Sanctorum Syriace* |
| Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* | Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica* (trans. Lake, Loeb Classical Library) |
| *Liber Turris* | Gismondi, *Maris, Amri, et Salibae* |
| *Mārī* | Gismondi, *Maris, Amri, et Salibae* |
| Raabe, *Geschichte* | *Die Geschichte des Dominus Mâri, eines Apostels des Orients* |
| *Ṣalībā* | Gismondi, *Maris, Amri, et Salibae* |
| *Teaching of Addai* | Phillips, *Doctrine* (reproduced with translation in Howard, *The Teaching of Addai*) |
| Yāqūt, *Muʿjam* | Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Muʿjam al-Buldān* (published by Dār Ṣādir) |

## SERIALS AND PERIODICALS

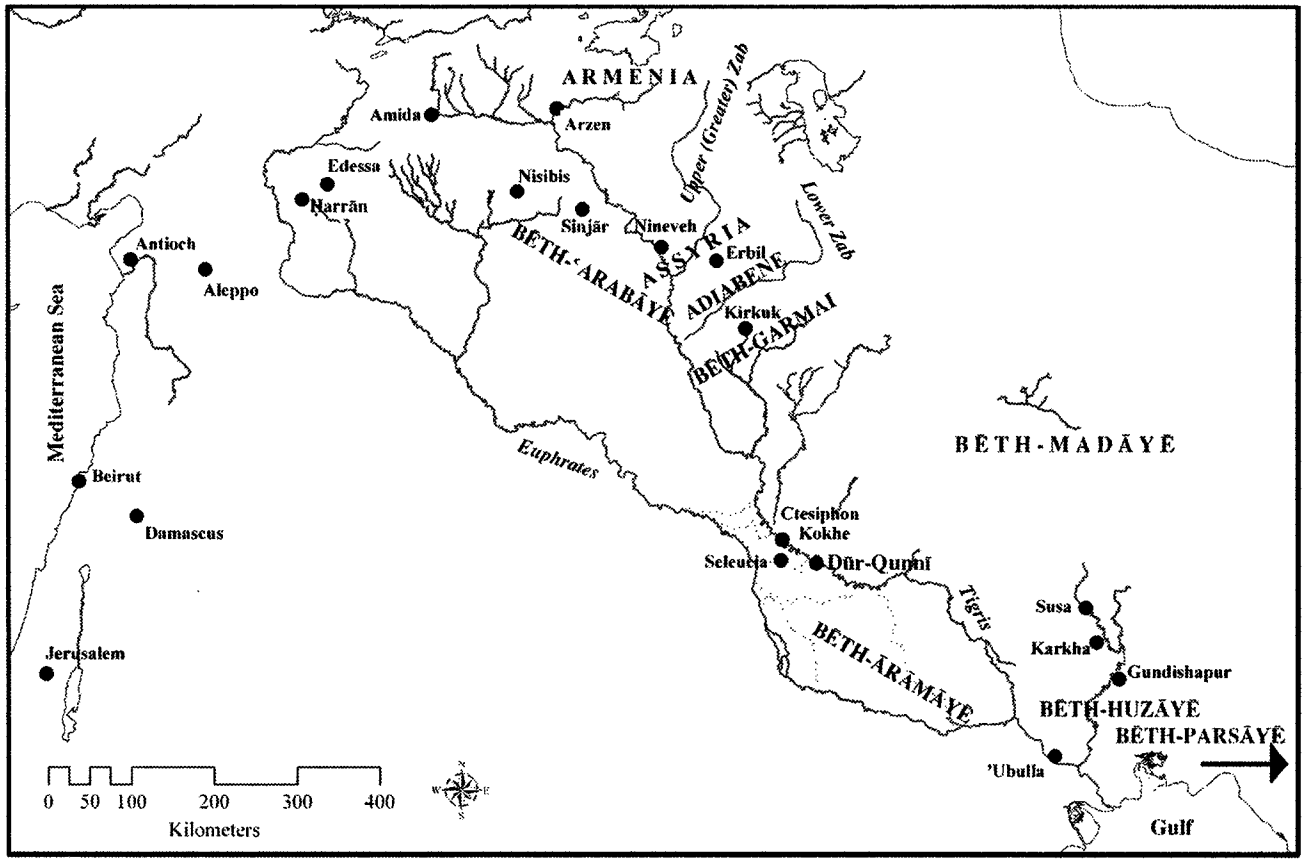
| | |
|---|---|
| *AnBoll* | *Analecta Bollandiana* |
| ARAM | ARAM Society for Syro-Mesopotamian Studies |
| CSCO | Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium |
| *JNES* | *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* |
| *Journal of the CSSS* | *Journal of the Canadian Society for Syriac Studies* |
| LCL | Loeb Classical Library |
| *Parole de l'Orient* | Kaslik |
| SBLTT | Society of Biblical Literature Texts and Translations |

## EDITORIAL ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| A | Abbeloos, *Acta* |
| B | Bedjan, *Acta* |
| CB | Raabe, *Geschichte* |




Babylonia: Cradle of Mesopotamian Christianity




The Near East During the First Centuries of Our Era

# Introduction

The Syriac *Acts of Mār Mārī the Apostle*[1] and an Arabic account found in a Christian source commonly referred to by its translated title *Liber Turris* (*Book of the Tower*)[2] discuss the introduction of Christianity to upper and lower Mesopotamia by the holy man Mār Mārī at the end of the first and beginning of the second centuries of our era. He was the disciple of Addai, also known as Thaddeus (Matt 10:3; Mark 3:18), one of the seventy (or seventy-two) disciples of Jesus (Luke 10:1), who himself preached Christianity in Edessa in Upper Syria, according to Greek and Syriac sources. At the order of Addai, Mārī moved eastward to Nisibis, and from there he descended toward Erbil and farther south in Mesopotamia until he reached Seleucia on the Tigris and Ctesiphon in Babylonia, where he founded the first church. The conversion of the whole of Mesopotamia was done through preaching and a series of miracles that struck the imagination and the hearts of the local people. As soon as a city or town was converted, Mārī is said to have founded a church, monastery, and school, appointing priests, deacons, and teachers over them. Eventually the Apostle of Babylonia, as he was known in later sources, retreated to a locality named Qunnī, which he had previously brought to Christ. He died there and was buried in the Monastery of Qunnī, which he himself had founded.

While there may be a historical core in the *Acts*, consisting of the person of Mār Mārī and his key role in converting Babylonia to Christianity, the *Acts* remains a literary work where history mingles with Syriac spirituality and where both are disguised under the cover of fictitious stories. As a literary genre, the *Acts of Mār Mārī* recalls the Acts of the Apostles, the fifth book of the New Testament. Both sources discuss the progress of Christianity through divine intervention at the hands of either the apostles

[1] Syr. *mār* means "lord" and is given to holy men and ecclesiastical leaders. Mārī, Aram. for "my lord," may be a shortened form of a composite name, e.g., Mār-yahb "The Lord has given (an heir)," attested in the *Teaching of Addai*, page ⟨ line 11 and passim.

[2] Henricus Gismondi, *Maris, Amri, et Salibae, de Patriarchis Nestorianorum commentaria II: Maris textus arabicus et versio latina* (Rome: Luigi, 1899).

or Mārī, the latter being one of the seventy disciples of Jesus, according to his own *Acts*. But as we will see, the *Acts of Mār Mārī* has more in common with apocryphal Acts and draws enormously on Syriac sources, such as the *Acts of Thomas* and especially the *Teaching of Addai*.

The present book contains the *Acts of Mār Mārī* in Syriac and the account extracted from *Liber Turris* in Arabic. Both sources are translated for the first time into English with notes. In order to shed more light on the contents of these sources, several pertinent points are discussed in the following pages, with the aim of providing an up-to-date view of the subject matter.

## A. THE MANUSCRIPTS

The *Acts of Mār Māri* is found in several manuscripts,[3] six of which are currently housed at the Chaldean Monastic Order of Saint Hormizdas in Baghdad. These nineteenth-century manuscripts were copied either in Alqosh or in nearby Talkef (north of Iraq) in series entitled Stories of Saints and Martyrs. Three of the six manuscripts were previously listed by Vosté,[4] but the three others were only recently catalogued.[5] Manuscripts that have been edited include one copied in Alqosh in 1881 by a certain Abraham of the Qāshā (Priest) family, on the basis of a nineteenth-century manuscript produced by a master copyist named ʿĪsā Aqrūrāiā. Abbeloos compared the Alqosh manuscript (labeled A hereafter) with an older version given to him by Bishop G. Khayyath of Amida and published it with a Latin translation and a list of variants in 1885.[6] In 1893 Raabe compared another

[3] Anton Baumstark, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur* (Bonn: Marcus & Webers, 1922), 28 and n. 5.

[4] Jacques Vosté, *Catalogue de la Bibliothèque Syro-Chaldéenne du couvent de N.-D. des Semences* (Paris: Geuthner, 1929), Nos. 214/2, 215/1, 217/2.

[5] Petrus Haddad and Jacques Isaac, *Al-Makhṭūṭāt al-suriāniyya wal-ʿarabiyya fī khizānat al-ruhbāniyya al-kaldāniyya*, I. *Al-Makhṭūṭāt al-suriāniyya* [The Syriac and Garshuni Manuscripts in the Library of the Chaldean Monastery in Baghdad, I. Syriac Manuscripts,] (Baghdad: Iraqi Academy Press, 1988), Nos. 622/2, 624/1, 628/2 (= Vosté, *Catalogue*, No. 214), 630/2 (= Vosté, *Catalogue*, No. 217), 636/1.

[6] Jean-Baptiste Abbeloos, "Acta Sancti Maris," *AnBoll* 4 (1885): 43-138. Nöldeke reviewed Abbeloos's edition and translation, but his review could not

manuscript housed in Berlin (referred to as CB hereafter) with the edition of Abbeloos.[7] The variants were included in the footnotes added to his German translation of the *Acts*. Raabe offered interesting insights as far the Syriac text was concerned, both in his translation and in his comments about its reading and content.

A third manuscript (B hereafter) was edited by Bedjan in 1890[8] in light of Abbeloos's edition, but this version is somewhat different from the first two. It lacks details in a few accounts, as in the case of the singers and musicians that Mār Mārī had to provide for his banquet at the assembly of Seleucia (§22), the debate between Mār Mārī and the head of said assembly on whether or not God had taken a woman and had a son from her (§20), and the healing of the boatman whose "anus was plugged" (§27). Since Bedjan's edition was meant to educate the Syriac-speaking public in spiritual matters,[9] one wonders if he did not willingly chop those details, judging them unnecessary. Unfortunately, this manuscript could not be consulted, either to answer the question about the lack of said details or to collate his edition. Nor could the first two manuscripts be consulted physically, due to their inaccessibility. Instead, I made use of the three printed editions, noting the variants between them, taking Abbeloos's edition for a master copy. Providing the Syriac text in this manner is preferable to giving a translation without the Syriac original.

The *Acts of Mār Mārī* was translated into at least three languages. I have already mentioned the Latin translation by Abbeloos (1885) and the German translation by Raabe (1893). There are also two translations in Arabic: one by Bishop Addai Scher of Seert (Turkey) published in 1900,[10] but which could not be consulted, and a more recent one (1985) by Fr. Albert Abūnā, former professor of Syriac at the Theological Seminary of Mosul,

be accessed; for this reference see R. Raabe, *Die Geschichte des Dominus Mâri, eines Apostels des Orients* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1893), 6.

[7] Raabe, *Geschichte*. I am extremely grateful to Dr. Wassilios Klein of Bonn University, who provided me with a copy of this publication, which is otherwise virtually inaccessible. For the Berlin manuscript see its description in Eduard Sachau, *Reise in Syrien und Mesopotamien* (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1883).

[8] Paul Bedjan, *Acta Martyrum et Sanctorum Syriace* (7 vols.; Leipzig: Harrassowitz 1890–1897; repr., Hildesheim: Olms, 1968), 1:45–94.

[9] Ibid., 1:v.

[10] Addai Scher, *Kitāb sīrat ʾašhar šuhadāʾ al-mašriq al-qiddīsīn* (2 vols.; Mosul: 1900–1906), 1:14–40.

Iraq. The latter's translation is abridged; large sections at the beginning and at the end of the *Acts* were omitted.[11]

## B. THE DATE OF THE *ACTS OF MĀR MĀRĪ*

The date of the *Acts of Mār Mārī* has proven to be a controversial issue. The first editor of the text, Abbeloos, opted for a period not before the sixth or perhaps the seventh century.[12] Markwart thought that the date must be late because of two geographical names, Zawzan and Gawar, that are unattested in the early periods.[13] On the other hand, several scholars preferred a date after the collapse of the Sassanian Empire at the hands of the Arabs in the middle of the seventh century, supposedly referred to by the *Acts*.[14] The *Acts* also mentions various cults in Mesopotamia, such as the cult of trees and stones, but misses the cult of fire, a landmark of Sassanian culture.[15] This is not to mention the anachronisms in the *Acts*, such as making Papa (end of the third century) contemporary to Mār Mārī (end of the first century) and the casting of some stories on the basis of the book of Daniel, literary practices thought to have developed later.

Some of the reasons behind the dates given above can be rejected. For example, the *Acts* never refers to the end of the Sassanian era, and there is no reason to date the *Acts* to or near that event. Let us give the controversial passage in the *Acts* that confused some scholars:

> *The other kingdom of the Persians, which had ended with the advent of Ardashir, had not yet begun. Now the cities and territories of Babylonia and Persia were full of small kings, but the Parthians were ruling the territory of Babylonia. At that time, the Parthian Aphrahaṭ son of Aphrahaṭ was reigning in Babylonia–in Seleucia and Ctesiphon in Bēth-Arāmāyē.* (§17)

[11] Albert Abūnā, *Šuhadā' al-mašriq* (Baghdad: Maṭbaʿat al-Khulūd, 1985), 1:15–35.

[12] Abbeloos, "Acta," 6–7.

[13] Josef Markwart, *Südarmenien und die Tigrisquellen nach griechischen und arabischen Geographen* (Wien: Mechitharisten-Buchdruckerei, 1930), 382.

[14] Raabe, *Geschichte*, 25; Jean-Baptiste Chabot, *Littérature syriaque* (Paris: Bloud et Gay, 1934), 40; Markwart, *Südarmenien*, 382.

[15] Rubens Duval, *La Littérature syriaque* (Paris: Lecoffre, 1900), 118.

It goes without saying that the Ardashir mentioned in the text founded the Sassanian dynasty circa 224, after he had defeated the last Parthian ruler, Arṭaban V (213–224). It is also well known that the Sassanian dynasty ruled by Yazdgard III collapsed at the hands of the Arabs in 636. If the *Acts* referred to this most important event in Near Eastern history, it would be rather strange not to mention the Arabs in any manner. Moreover, the focus in the awkward passage is on the Parthians, referred to as the "other kingdom of the Persians," even though it clearly underestimates them. The *Acts* claims that there were many small kings who ruled over Persia and Mesopotamia at the time of Mār Mārī and that the Parthians were ruling solely over Babylonia. Elsewhere the *Acts* claims that Aphrahaṭ son of Aphrahaṭ was ruling over Seleucia, whereas another king named Arṭaban ruled over Ctesiphon. The *Acts* ignores the fact that the Parthians were the masters of Persia and Mesopotamia by the first Christian century, though they allowed small kingdoms to flourish, as in the case of Edessa, Arbela, and Hatra. On the other hand, Raabe's suggestion that the name of Ardashir is mistaken for Yazdgerd[16] is not convincing, since it requires an emendation of the text, and hence the possibility of doctoring it. Thus the passage under discussion makes no reference whatsoever to the end of the Sassanian era and fails to suggest a date in connection with this historical event.[17]

Nor can we assign the *Acts* a late date because of the toponyms Gawar and Zawzan, as suggested by Markwart. First, these names do not sound Arabic so as to suggest a date in the Arab era. Second, the fact that names appear uniquely in Arab sources (the case of Zawzan) does not necessarily mean that they were given to places during the Arab period alone. In fact, the majority of the geographical names in the *Acts* are well attested in Syriac sources of the pre-Islamic period, and one is rather surprised by the total absence of unquestionably Arab geographical names. Thus Baṣrah is never mentioned with Maishan, Wāsiṭ (built by al-Ḥajjāj) with Kashkar, and Mosul with Athōr and/or Nineveh. Though there was a tendency among Syriac authors

[16] Raabe, *Geschichte*, 34 n. 3.

[17] See also Marie-Louise Chaumont, *La Christianisation de l'empire iranien des origines aux grandes persécutions du IV^e siècle* (CSCO 499, Subsidia 80; Louvain: Peeters, 1988), 29.

of the Arab period to use Arabic toponyms in reference to pre-Islamic places,[18] no such confusion is attested in the *Acts*. In light of this lack of references to Arab matters, one can safely conclude that the *Acts* must be dated sometime before the advent of Islam.

As for the cults of trees, water sources, and stones that are also mentioned in late Syriac sources, one must admit that such cults must have existed in Mesopotamia much earlier than the ninth century, as suggested by Duval. Rivers and water sources were deified in ancient Mesopotamia, and the cult of stones is attested, if not in Mesopotamia, then certainly in pre-Islamic Arabia. On the other hand, the *Acts* mentions other cults familiar in Mesopotamia, such as the cult of Ishtar (Astarte), a truly Mesopotamian deity (§30); the cult of the Sun (§25) as the god of justice, just as this deity was worshiped in Babylonia (see the Code of Hammurabi); and the cult of the Eagle (§30), which is well attested in Hatra (pre- and post-Christian eras). The claim that the cult of fire is not mentioned as frequently as one would expect in Sassanian Mesopotamia is also invalid. This was the state cult of the Indo-Aryan Sassanians ruling Mesopotamia; the largely Semitic peoples of this land were not subjected to it.[19] Second, by the first Christian century the cult was probably limited to the Parthians in Mesopotamia,[20] unlike its more important role during the Sassanian period in this same land. Third, the *Acts* do refer to the fire as "goddess" of the Parthians in Seleucia-Ctesiphon in one account (§23).

Taking into consideration the lack of toponyms, personal names, and technical terms clearly of Arab origin and considering the large number of Persian names, various cults native to Mesopotamia, and the Sassanian cult of fire, one can safely conclude that the *Acts* predated the Arab period. It cannot be dated earlier than the fourth century, however. First, it mentions Papa, who occupied the see of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, was deposed from it, and may have reoccupied it until he died—events that took place

[18] For example, calling the pre-Islamic "bishopric of Nineveh" the "bishopric of Mosul" or claiming that Mār Mārī built the "church of Dāwertā in Baghdad"; see the appendix, p. 86.

[19] In Sassanian Mesopotamia, conversion from Zoroastrianism to Christianity was not tolerated, whereas there is no evidence of compulsory conversion from Christianity to Zoroastrianism initiated by the state.

[20] Chaumont, *Christianisation*, 24–25.

between the end of the third and the early decades of the fourth centuries.[21] Second, the *Acts* mentions monasteries and schools, while it is generally agreed that institutionalized monasticism appeared around the middle of the fifth century[22] and took time to develop and expand. Third and most important, the *Teaching of Addai,* which found its way into the *Acts of Mār Mārī,* is dated around the beginning of the fifth century, as suggested by terms and themes found in the speeches of Addai in Edessa.[23] Finally, the *Acts* talks about the places supposedly visited by Mār Mārī as well-established and mature Christian centers during a time of peace and prosperity "where the Evil could not molest and Satan could not harass" (§32). This can hardly be the fourth century, which witnessed a persecution launched by Shapur II that lasted forty years, beginning in the year 341. The fifth century was no less harsh toward the Christians of Mesopotamia, who suffered several official persecutions. By contrast, the sixth century was a time of relative peace, prosperity, and territorial expansion enjoyed by the church of Babylonia. This could well be the time when the *Acts of Mār Mārī* was written, though this line of reasoning does not suggest a more specific date.

## C. THE AUTHOR

The author of the *Acts of Mār Mārī* did not give his name, but from the *Acts* we know that he was a monk in the Monastery of Qunnī (Dayr Qunnī), also called the Monastery of Mār Mārī the

[21] It was Bar-Hebraeus (fourteenth century) who claimed that Papa was not deposed; Jean-Baptiste Abbeloos and T. J. Lamy, eds., *Gregorii Barhebraei Chronicon Ecclesiasticum* (3 vols.; Louvain: Peeters, 1872–1877), vol. 2, col. 30; Jean Labourt, *Le Christianisme dans l'empire perse sous la dynastie sassanide 224–632* (Paris: Lecoffre, 1904), 23 n. 2; Jean-Maurice Fiey, *Jalons pour une histoire de l'Église en Iraq* (CSCO 310, Subsidia 36; Louvain: Peeters, 1970), 74–75.

[22] Fiey, *Jalons,* 101–12; Shafiq AbouZayd, *Iḥidayutha: A Study of the Life of Singleness in the Syrian Orient from Ignatius of Antioch to Chalcedon 451 A.D.* (Oxford: ARAM Society for Syro-Mesopotamian Studies, 1993), 308.

[23] For more details, see Sebastian Brock, "Eusebius and Syriac Christianity," in *Eusebius, Christianity and Judaism* (ed. H. W. Attridge and G. Hata; Leiden: Brill, 1992), 227–28; Sidney Griffith, "Christianity in Edessa and the Syriac-Speaking World: Mani, Bar Daysan and Ephraem; the Struggle for Allegiance on the Aramean Frontier," *Journal of the CSSS* 2 (2002): 6–7.

Apostle.[24] Perhaps he wrote the *Acts* so as to highlight the importance of his monastery, which contained the bones of this saint: "We, more than all his other disciples, ought to be diligent in honoring our Father . . . because the saint wanted his holy bones to be deposited in this place and among us, rather than in any other place" (§34). Perhaps he wrote them for the commemoration day of Mār Mārī, as suggested by the rhetoric in §10 and the exhortation to "honor the commemoration day of this holy apostle and hero of righteousness" (§34).[25] As early as 1904 Labourt talked about the propagandistic nature of the *Acts* in favor of Dayr Qunnī.[26]

Al-Shābishtī (tenth century) located the Monastery of Qunnī sixteen *farsakh* (about 90 km) south of Baghdad[27] and described it as a fortress surrounded by a formidable wall. The ruins of the monastery are located nowadays about 2 km away from the Tigris, but we know from the *Acts* that it was built (surely not at the time of Mār Mārī) on the bank of this river. The humidity of the terrain created great difficulties while building it (§29), and this must have been true in any period, given the marshy nature of that region. The monastery also became the last resting place of several East Syriac patriarchs, among whom were Isaac (d. 410/411) and Dadisho' Samuel (d. 456). The patriarchs wanted to rest beside the founder of Christianity in Babylonia.

As for the school of Qunnī said to have been founded by Mār Mārī, it was established along with the monastery by Mār 'Abdā near the end of the fourth century, once Christianity had taken hold there.[28] Later on, prominent scholars graduated from it, such as the logician Mattā son of Yūnis (d. 940), the future patriarch Israel (961), and the latter's own student, the future

[24] The Monastery of Mār Mārī the Apostle is known through the tenth-century *Kitāb al-diyārāt* of al-Shābishtī; see Gōrgīs 'Awwād, ed., *Al-diyārāt ta'līf 'Alī ibn Muḥammad abū al-Ḥasan al-ma'rūf bil-Šābištī* (Baghdad: Maṭba'at al-Ma'ārif, 1951), 171–72, 248–50.

[25] See also Raabe, *Geschichte*, 9.

[26] Labourt, *Christianisme*, 15.

[27] 'Awwād, *Al-diyārāt*, 171–72

[28] Jean-Maurice Fiey, *Assyrie chrétienne: Contribution à l'étude de l'histoire et de la géographie ecclésiastiques et monastiques du nord de l'Iraq* (3 vols.; Beirut: Dar el-Machreq, 1968), 3:189.

patriarch Isho'yahb son of Ezekiel (1020). The monastery was almost in ruins at the time of Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī (d. 1228).[29]

## D. SOURCES OF THE *ACTS OF MĀR MĀRĪ*

The author of the *Acts of Mār Mārī* claimed that he wrote down the tradition about this holy man as "transmitted in the books" (§6) but failed to identify his sources. He must have incorporated in his edition of the *Acts* pieces of information from some old sources, but they must have been fused within the edition in such a way that they are no longer individually distinguishable. Elsewhere it is written: "We have truly witnessed this matter and did not receive it orally from somebody," the matter being the transfer of the riverbed by Mār Mārī (§29). Though the pronoun in the quoted sentence can refer to the writer of the *Acts* or to the author of one of his quoted sources, neither is likely to have been an eyewitness. No one single source, whether written by an eyewitness or by any other writer, for that matter, has ever survived from the time of Mār Mārī, let alone the supposed contemporary report about the event referred to above.

Otherwise, the *Acts of Mār Mārī* is a literary composition that takes after a literary prototype: the *Teaching of Addai*. But the *Acts* also draws on Eusebius of Caesarea, the Bible (namely, the book of Daniel), and the ancient Mesopotamian literary repertoire. While it is possible to identify such borrowings, there remain others that cannot be assigned prototypes. In the following subsections I will identify the sources clearly detectable in the *Acts*.

### *1. The Teaching of Addai*

There is nothing new in saying that the *Acts of Mār Mārī* and the *Teaching of Addai* form one cycle, the former meant to be an expansion of the latter.[30] The *Acts* claims that it was Addai who sent

[29] Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Mu'jam al-buldān* (ed. anonymous; 5 vols.; Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1986), 2:528.

[30] George Howard, *The Teaching of Addai* (SBLTT 16; Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1981). Note that the Syriac text in his book is a reprint of the one published by George Phillips, *The Doctrine of Addai the Apostle Now First Edited in a Complete Form in the Original Syriac* (London: Trübner, 1876).

"his disciple" Mār Mārī to Mesopotamia to preach Christianity, after he had placed his right hand on him. It was from Edessa that Mār Mārī is said to have left for the eastern regions, and while he was in Seleucia he twice contacted "his colleagues the apostles" stationed in Edessa for matters related to his mission in Babylonia. In addition to this link in plan, the *Acts* freely borrows sections, ideas, and expressions from the *Teaching of Addai,* as shown below.

The first part of the *Acts*, which deals with the correspondence of Abgar, king of Edessa, with Jesus and the king's subsequent healing and conversion at the hands of Addai, is directly borrowed from the *Teaching of Addai*. This serves as an introduction to the *Acts of Mār Mārī*, as the words that immediately follow the stories about Abgar shows: "Let us now turn our attention to show how the fear of God moved from there [Edessa] to our own territories [Babylonia]" (§6). Slightly after this statement the link between Addai and Mārī is expressly made clear, as seen above.

In Arzen, Mār Mārī is said to have healed the king of this land from the disease called ܓܘܬܐ, "gout." This is the disease suffered by King Abgar and probably by his officer ʿAbdū son of ʿAbdū, according to the *Teaching of Addai*. Moreover, according to the *Acts* Mārī made a statement to the king of Arzen that is almost the same as the one made by Addai to Abgar (the words in brackets are added by the *Acts of Mār Mārī*):

ܗܟܢܐ ܗܝ ܕܐܡܪ ܠܟ ܡܪܝ ܥܠ (*Addai* 49:14)

ܗܟܢܐ ܗܝ ܠܟ (ܐܢ ܬܗܝܡܢ ܒܗ) ܡܪܝ ܕܐܡܪ (*Mārī* §7, pp. 14:24–16:1)

*If you believe (in him), your requests will be answered.*

In fact, the account of the king of Arzen is an echo if not an exact replica of the account about King Abgar.

The *Acts* is indebted to the *Teaching of Addai* in describing the testimony given by Mār Mārī to his disciples before his death. Indeed, the *Acts* has Mār Mārī saying almost exactly the same words uttered by Addai on his sickbed (words in brackets are in the *Acts of Mār Mārī*):

ܐܬܝܬ ܠܟ ܡܢ ܡܪܝ ܕܐܡܪ ܠܝ ܗܐ
ܐܢ ܠܐ ܐܡܝܢ ܐܢ ܠܐ ܐܡܝܢ ܐܢ ܠܐ ܐܡܝܢ

ܫܠܝܚ̈ܐ (ܐ) ... ܕܝܢ ܐܦ ܐܢܬܘܢ ܠ. (ܐܝܟ ܕܐܬܝܗܒ) ܠܝ ܒܫܘܠܡ̈ܐ
(ܐ) ...ܠܡܫܚܠ

*And as my colleagues the apostles conducted themselves according to the rites and rules that were set for the disciples in Jerusalem, you too (must conduct yourselves according to them). Do not turn away from them (neither) to the right (n)or to the left* (*Mārī* §33, p. 76:19–23; *Teaching of Addai* ܐ:8–13).

The anti-Jewish polemic in the speech of Addai (ܐ 11–12) has been included almost verbatim in the speech of Mārī (§33). Moreover, the reply made by Addai's disciples to his speech (ܐ 20–22) also finds its echo in the reply made by Papa to Mār Mārī's speech. The following sentence occurs verbatim in both accounts: ܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܫܕܪ ܠܘܬܟܘܢ ܥܠ ܦܘܡ̈ܟܘܢ ܐܝܬ ܒܗ ܣܗܕ̈ܐ ܐܢܬ ܠܢ ܐܬ ܗܝ ܕܐܡܬܐ, "Christ who sent you to us is witness: you have taught us the true faith." One can say that Aggai, in the *Teaching of Addai*, is the prototype of Papa in the *Acts of Mār Mārī*.

*2. Eusebius of Caesarea*

The *Acts* also uses the *Ecclesiastical History* of Eusebius of Caesarea (ca. 260-ca. 340) in a Syriac translation. For example, in a discussion concerning the interest in depicting Jesus during his own time, the *Acts* mentions a copper statue of a woman whose blood had run for twelve years (see Mark 5:25–34). This statue is said to have stood on a rock opposite the woman's own house, and it depicted her with knees bent and arms outstretched. Beside her stood a copper statue of Jesus in which he was depicted as clad in a cloak, stretching his hand toward the woman (§1). This motif is found in *Hist. eccl.* 7.17.

*3. The Bible*

The Bible provided inspiration for many accounts found in the *Acts*. The prohibition against using fire for three days dedicated to the gods and the threat of being thrown into the fire for anyone who dared to use it (§12) are reminiscent of the story about the golden statue set up by Nebuchadnezzar and his threat of throwing into the fiery furnace anyone who did not worship it (Dan 3). Even the three-day motif recalls the thirty-day period decreed by

King Darius for the homage that everyone had to pay to him instead of anyone else in heaven and on earth (Dan 6:7, 12).

The account of Mārī going inside the blazing fire (§23) echoes another story in the book of Daniel, according to which Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were thrown into the furnace of blazing fire because of their refusal to worship the golden statue set up by Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 3:19–23). Mārī and the three biblical men were all spared from death by burning through divine intervention and because of their strong faith in God. The attempts to make the blaze even more fiery and destructive (Dan 3:19 and §23), so as to expose the faithful men to an even greater danger, are also most probably related.[31]

*4. The Mesopotamian Legacy*

The story of Mār Mārī at the assembly of Seleucia is particularly interesting and has attracted special scholarly attention during the past century. Most important, it indicates that the ancient Mesopotamian literary heritage was yet another source for the Syriac *Acts of Mār Mārī*. Upon arriving in Seleucia on the Tigris, the holy man had no other choice but to go to the local assembly to start his missionary activity (§§19–23). According to the *Acts,* there were in Seleucia three assemblies: one for the elders, another for the youth, and a third for the children. Mār Mārī opted for the assembly of the elders, "for they were more flexible," according to *Liber Turris* (see the appendix, p. 85). Because he was a foreigner, he was placed at the back of the assembly. After miraculously healing the president of the assembly and his deputy, who fell ill to the point of death one after the other, Mār Mārī became more acceptable at least to these two influential men within the assembly. He was even asked to prepare a banquet for the members of this assembly, "for there was a custom in Seleucia according to which the one who did the service had to bring bread, wine, perfume, and musicians from his house" (§22). The banquet was an integral part of the Seleucid assembly, according to the *Acts,* and hence Mār Mārī "joined them in singing and in merriment every day" (§19).

Cumont paid significant attention to this intriguing episode more than a century ago, seeing in the tripartite assembly a Greek

[31] Other borrowings from the Bible are referred to in the footnotes.

institution and even going so far as to translate the second sentence in the Syriac account into Greek.[32] In doing so, he associated Syriac *puḥrā d-sābē,* "assembly of the elders," with the Greek *gerousia,* a council made of a certain number of *gerontes,* "elders." In *puḥrā da-ʿlaymē* he saw the Greek *ephēboi,* young men fourteen to twenty years of age who obtained their education in the *ephēbia,* an institution that was still functioning during the second century of our era, before it disappeared shortly thereafter. As for the *puḥrā da-ṭlāyē,* Cumont identified it with the school of the *neoi,* an institution designed to give youngsters an early education. He also translated *qaššīš puḥrā* as *prostatis,* "president," of the Greek inscriptions, whereas the title of the president's assistant was taken (though hesitantly) as the equivalent of the *gymnasiarch* of the Greek sources.[33]

Furthermore, Cumont held the opinion that the assembly of the elders did not have any political role to play, unlike the Greek *boulē,* a council of citizens that undertook the affairs of the city. Rather, it was a group of men of mature age who gathered for entertainment, something like the *Bürgercasinos* of German cities in the late 1800s. As for the claim made by the *Acts* that the elders of Seleucia indulged themselves in drunkenness and overeating, Cumont thought that the *Acts* meant to ridicule this mundane assembly and at the same time to highlight the struggle facing Mār Mārī in converting perverse people. In addition, according to Cumont the author of the *Acts* provides historical information about the Hellenistic assembly not found even in Greek sources.[34]

Though the Hellenistic assembly was probably not much different from its Mesopotamian counterpart, there are strong reasons to believe that the assembly of Seleucia was Babylonian in origin. First, the Syriac and Arabic (in *Liber Turris*) terms in reference to the assembly and its constituents are either translated from or transcriptions of Akkadian:

[32] Franz Cumont, "Note sur un passage des Actes de St Mâri," *Revue de l'instruction publique en Belgique* 36 (1893): 373–78.

[33] Ibid, 378.

[34] As recently as 1988 Chaumont (*Christianisation,* 26–27) seems to have accepted Cumont's conclusions confirming the historicity of the assembly of Seleucia.

| | Syriac | Arabic | Akkadian |
|---|---|---|---|
| Assembly | *puḥrā* | *fuḥr* | *puḫru* |
| Head of the Assembly | *qaššīš puḥrā* | *raʾīs al-fuḥr* | *rab puḫri* |
| Assembly of the Elders | *puḥrā d-sābē* | *fuḥr al-mašāʾikh* | *puḫru ša šībūtu* |

Second, the description of the assembly in *Liber Turris* corresponds to the true nature of the Babylonian assembly. In this Christian Arabic source the Seleucid assembly is defined as a "convention in which people gathered with regard to religion according to specific rules" (appendix, p. 85). The source in question must have used another version of the *Acts of Mār Mārī* that Cumont did not consult, and thus the identification of Seleucia's assembly as some kind of *Bürgercasinos* of German cities is inappropriate. Babylonian *puḫru* refers technically to one of the most prestigious social and religious institutions in Mesopotamia, the assembly. Since the dawn of history, Mesopotamian cities each had a popular assembly made of socially equal citizens. Babylonian sources of the first millennium B.C. refer to *puḫru ša māti,* "assembly of the country"; *puḫur ummāni*, "assembly of the people"; and the assemblies of Babylon, Sippar, Nippur, Ur, Uruk, and so forth. Thus the "*puḥrā* of Seleucia" could have been yet another local Babylonian assembly.

The mandate of the Mesopotamian historical assembly consisted of making judicial decisions in the context of family law and property, and in the latter domain it dealt specifically with temple property and thefts of cattle.[35] Nonetheless, nowhere in cuneiform historical sources is it mentioned that the mandate also included banquets and merrymaking. While the historical assembly did not include banqueting, the banquet was an integral part of the divine assembly in Mesopotamian mythology. In at least two places the Babylonian Epic of Creation (*Enuma Elish*) makes reference to the divine assembly, including the banquet motif. In tablet III 130–138 the gods are said to have assembled to assign Marduk the task

[35] On the Babylonian assembly, see Muhammad Dandamajev, "The Neo-Babylonian Popular Assembly," in *Šulmu: Papers on the Ancient Near East Presented at International Conference of Socialist Countries (Prague, Sept. 30-Oct. 3, 1986)* (ed. P. Vavroušek et al.; Prague: Charles University, 1988), 63–71.

of killing Tiamat, as follows:[36]

*ilū rabûti kališunu mušimmū šīmāti*
*īrubūma muttiš Anšar imlû [ḫūdûta]*
*innišqū aḫū aḫī ina puḫri* (UKKIN) *[...]*
*lišānu iškunū ina qirēti ušbū*
*ašnan īkulū iptiqū kurunnu*
*širisa matqu usanninū rāṭīš[un]*
*šikru ina šatê ḫabāṣu zum[ri]*
*ma'diš ēgû kabattašun ītel[liṣ]*
*ana Marduk muter gimillīšunu išimmū šīmta*

All the great gods who fix the fates,
entered into the presence of Anshar and were filled with joy.
They kissed each other, in the assembly [...]
They exchanged words, they sat at the banquet,
they ate grain, drank fine wine,
they wetted their drinking pipes with sweet beer.
While drinking beer, their bodies turned animated;
they became quite carefree, and were very happy;
to Marduk their avenger they decreed destiny.

During the debate, the deities also make Marduk the head of their assembly. In tablet VI, where the debate about making Marduk the head of the Babylonian pantheon is about to end, Marduk addresses the gods in the following terms (VI 72–75):[37]

*Annam Bābili šubat narmêkun*
*nugâ ašruššu ḫidûtašu tašbāma*
*ūšibūma ilū rabûti*
*zarbaba iškunū ina qirēti ušbū*

'Yes! Babylon is also your dwelling place!
Sing joyfully there, reside in happiness!'
The great gods sat down,
they set out the beer mugs; they sat at the banquet.

It is thus clear that the banquet at the assembly existed in Mesopotamian mythology, while cuneiform sources never referred to it in the historical assembly. The assembly in the *Acts,* including the banquet, is closer in structure to the mythical rather than to the historical assembly of ancient Mesopotamia, in such a

[36] Wilfred G. Lambert and Simon B. Parker, *Enūma Eliš, the Babylonian Epic of Creation: The Cuneiform Text* (Birmingham: Clarendon, 1969), 20.

[37] Ibid., 36.

way that the Syriac term *puḥrā* means solely "banquet" [38] outside the *Acts of Mār Mārī*. Thus, the Mesopotamian literary legacy served as yet another source for the writer of the *Acts of Mār Mārī*.[39]

### 5. *Other Sources*

This subsection covers an ancient source in the *Acts of Mār Mārī* that was identified in the late 1960s by the late Fr. Jean Maurice Fiey.[40] This eminent scholar of Syriac Christianity noticed that *Liber Turris* describes the location of Kokhe, the place where Mār Mārī founded the first church in Babylonia, in terms not fitting the topography of Babylonia after 116. Kokhe was located beside Ctesiphon, slightly to the south of it, across an empty valley, the former bed of the Tigris. Ctesiphon and Kokhe were in turn separated from Seleucia by the Tigris. Sometime between 79 and 116 the Tigris changed its course, as it used to do in ancient times, given the alluvial nature of the terrain in southern Mesopotamia. It began to run in the empty valley located between Ctesiphon and Kokhe, effectively separating the two in such a way that Kokhe and Seleucia were found on one side of the Tigris and Ctesiphon, alone, on the other.

The ancient source identified by Fiey in *Liber Turris* claims that at the beginning Mār Mārī did not preach Christianity in Seleucia but in Kokhe. In doing so, he crossed the Tigris from Seleucia to Kokhe, and this statement reflects the topography of the region before the Tigris shifted its bed. In other words, Mār Mārī preached Christianity in Babylonia between 79 and 116 of our era.

The *Acts of Mār Mārī* may endorse this topography. When the pagan priests realized that their doctrines were beginning to lose ground in Seleucia before the preaching of Mārī, "all of them gathered and crossed over to Ctesiphon, to king Arṭaban, who was ruling from Ctesiphon and Gokhay" (§26). Gokhay is most

[38] Robert Payne Smith, *Thesaurus syriacus* (2 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1879–1901; repr. Hildesheim: Olms, 1981), 2:3085; ʾŪjēn Mannā, *Dalīl al-rāġibīn fī luġat al-ʾārāmiyyīn* (Mosul: Dayr al-ʾābāʾ al-dūminikiyyīn, 1900), 583.

[39] See, in more detail, Amir Harrak, "The Assembly of Seleucia on the Tigris according to the Acts of Mār Mārī," in *Ideologies as Intercultural Phenomena* (ed. A. Panaino and G. Pettinato; Melammu Symposia 3; Milano: Università di Bologna & ISIAO, 2002), 109–18.

[40] Fiey, *Jalons*, 41–44.

probably a misspelling of the familiar Kokhe, located south of Ctesiphon. At any rate, Fiey's observation is insightful. One would only assume that the activities of Mār Mārī were recorded at an early stage (perhaps during his lifetime) or that the memory of his presence in Seleucia-Ctesiphon remained truly vivid in the mind of the early Christians, so as to justify the transmission of a topographical detail throughout the centuries without being distorted. Otherwise, no written source has ever survived from the first and the second centuries.

## E. LITERARY CONSIDERATIONS

The *Acts of Mār Mārī* shares with the Acts of the Apostles, the fifth book of the New Testament, the aim of tracing the origins of Christianity since its genesis. The strongest link between both sources is their own preaching heroes: the apostles in the Acts of the Apostles; and Mārī, said by his *Acts* to be one of the "the seventy disciples" (§1) mentioned in Luke 10:1, 17.[41] They also share the basic belief that Christianity was of divine origin, as evidenced through the numerous miracles performed by the apostles in Acts and by Mārī in the *Acts of Mār Mārī*. What is more, the latter source without hesitation compares its hero to the Apostle Paul, claiming that both were selected for apostleship after all the other apostles (§10).

Nonetheless, the similarities between the *Acts of Mār Mārī* and the New Testament Acts are superficial, and the former has more in common with such apocryphal Acts as the *Acts of Peter, Paul, John, Andrew,* and *Thomas,* all having the same literary framework. Being historical novels, their goal is to entertain and edify, and such topoi as preaching, adventures, miracles, and wonders play pivotal roles in reaching that goal.[42] The *Acts of Mār Mārī* is even more indebted to the Syriac apocryphal Acts, particularly the *Acts of Thomas* and the *Teaching* (or better, *Acts*)

[41] The title was borrowed by the *Acts of Mār Mārī* from the *Teaching of Addai*.

[42] For a literary analysis of the apocryphal Acts, see Richard I. Pervo, *Profit with Delight: The Literary Genre of the Acts of the Apostles* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987).

*of Addai.* The third-century *Acts of Thomas*[43] deals with the missionary activities of Judas Thomas in India, and the early fifth-century *Teaching of Addai* relates the mission of Addai in Upper Syria.[44] These sources along with the *Acts of Mār Mārī* form one literary cycle according to which Thomas sent Addai to Edessa and Addai dispatched Mārī to the rest of Mesopotamia.[45] Far more important are the ascetic expressions, the high symbolism, and the theology that are embedded in all these Syriac sources.

As mentioned earlier, the miracles in the Acts of the Apostles highlight the divine origin of Christianity, and this is also the case in our three Syriac Acts. Interestingly, nearly all the miracles in the latter sources consist of healing physical ailments of the sick followed by their acceptance of Christ through baptism. Thus, the miracles that seem to belong to thaumaturgy actually convey a theological lesson of prime importance: healing and salvation go hand in hand. In fact, baptism is conceived as the healing of souls and bodies (*Acts of Thomas* §157), and this explains why it is called the "sign of life" in both the *Acts of Thomas* (§150) and the *Acts of Mār Mārī* (§24). The latter goes even further by considering the preaching of Christianity as the sowing of the "seed of life" (§8), and this is a master theme throughout its contents.

In performing miracles Mārī plays the role of a healer who cares about the physical welfare of people, particularly the young and defenseless. In the story of the little girl named Phraṭia, Mārī heals "every single illness" that is in her (§12). In the account about king ʾĀdār (§16), Mārī questions with keen interest why the king's daughter is walking with the help of slaves; when he learns that she is paralyzed, he earnestly heals her from paralysis. While Mārī is dubbed a "skilled physician" (§28) by his witnesses, the healings in his *Acts* illustrate that he was a mere follower of Jesus, known in Syriac Christianity under the title "the good physician," as in the alleged letter of Abgar to Jesus. The New Testament is ultimately the main source for this title, since Jesus is represented here as a healer, and this is also true for the apostles in the Acts

[43] Edition and translation are in Albertus F. J. Klein, *The Acts of Thomas: Introduction, Text, Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 1962).

[44] See most recently, Griffith, "Christianity in Edessa," 5–20.

[45] For more about this cycle, see Amir Harrak, "Trade Routes and the Christianization of the Near East," *Journal of the CSSS* 2 (2002): 46–61.

of the Apostles.[46] The *Acts of Thomas* (§§95, 155) dwells on the healing theme, calling Jesus and Thomas "physicians" and pointing out that Thomas healed both souls and bodies. As for Addai, he says in his *Teaching* that he is no ordinary physician but "the disciple of Jesus the Messiah, the Physician of troubled souls."[47]

It is interesting to note that Mārī treats the sick with oil sometimes mixed with water (§§8, 27, 28). Oil and physical healing form an ancient Christian motif that probably originated from James 5:14. This document teaches that the "elders of the church" are to be called to pray over the sick, "anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord." The *Acts of Thomas* (§121) continues by indicating that the holy oil that contains the "hidden power that dwells in the Messiah" is capable of healing "old" wounds and sores and of restoring weaknesses. The same *Acts* (§132) calls the holy oil "name of the Messiah," playing on the words *mešḥā,* "oil," and *mešīḥā,* "Messiah" (lit. "The anointed one"), both deriving from the same root *mšḥ*, "to anoint." In the *Acts of Mār Mārī* the belief in the healing oil is translated into the total healing of the king of Erbil stricken with *lepra leonine*. After drinking from the holy oil and water offered to him by Mārī, his decaying flesh becomes as tender as that of a small child (§8). Nonetheless, oil and water are mostly sacramental in nature. In Syriac the term *rušmā*, "signing," refers to the sacramental anointing of the person before he or she is immersed in baptismal water; thus, oil and baptism are inseparable. In all the cases where Mārī administers oil to the sick, according to the view of his *Acts* he heals them from their spiritual ailments in preparation for baptism, the "sign of life" (*rušmā d-ḥayyē*) par excellence, which they all accept. Healing initiated by baptism is fulfilled by the Eucharist. After the conversion of a place, Mār Mārī always establishes priests and deacons, whose obvious function is to celebrate the "life-giving" body and blood of Christ (*Acts of Mār Mārī* §§14, 25, 30, etc.; *Acts of Thomas* §158).

The healing of Mār Mārī includes deliverance of people from demons, devils, and evil spirits (§§7, 9, 10, 13–15, 26). There is also a baptismal dimension in this healing, since the liberation from demonic powers is the first step toward the ultimate healing by baptism. Demons, devils, and evil spirits are related to the

[46] Robert Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom: A Study in Early Syriac Tradition* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 199–200.

[47] Howard, *Teaching of Addai*, 39.

Evil One, described in the *Acts of Thomas* (§44) as hideous in look, crafty, deceitful, and the archenemy of the servants of the Messiah. This description finds its exact echo in the *Acts of Mār Mārī* (§14), and, in addition, the *Acts of Thomas* and the *Acts of Mār Mārī* share many other details about demons. For instance, both sources call the dwelling place of the demons the "abyss" (*Acts of Mār Mārī* §§9 [Lower Tartarus], 14; *Acts of Thomas* §45) and describe in the same terms the victims of demons, in that they usually foam and are thrown to the ground (*Acts of Mār Mārī* §9; *Acts of Thomas* §§30, 33, 37, etc.). In both texts demons are expelled through prayer and the mention of the name of Christ (*Acts of Mār Mārī* §§9, 14, etc; *Acts of Thomas* §43), and they are likened to insects (*Acts of Mār Mārī* §14) and animals, namely, snakes (*Acts of Thomas* §31). Even the disappearance of demons is strikingly similar: demons are turned into a "dark whirlwind" in the *Acts of Mār Mārī* (§9) and into "smoke and fire" in the *Acts of Thomas* (§89). They can have "many hideous shapes" in the *Acts of Thomas* (§88) and in the *Acts of Mār Mārī* (§14) "various likenesses, such as unclean beasts and insects."[48] As is clear, not only are both of these texts related to each other with regard to demons, but they both sprung from the same cultural soil of ancient Mesopotamia, a land obsessed with demons and everything demonic throughout its history.

There are other shared literary motifs in the Syriac sources under discussion, such as the belief that the Christian message was addressed first to rulers, who always had either a daughter or a sister stricken with leprosy or paralysis. The miraculous healing of the princesses always resulted in the conversion of the rulers and after them the populace in a systematic manner. In the case of Mār Mārī, he challenged the kings of Arzen, Erbil, Seleucia, and Ctesiphon, to name only a few. Shahgird, king of Bēth-Garmai (§12) had one only daughter, and the king of Ctesiphon only one sister, Qunnī (§24)—both stricken with incurable diseases. Mārī miraculously cured both princesses, and, as a result, the kings accepted baptism. Since the two presidents of the assembly in Seleucia who

[48] Interestingly, in the *Acts of Mār Mārī* demons dare not utter the name of Jesus or Christ or both but call him "son of Mary" (§14), and this is how demons in the eighth- century *Chronicle of Zuqnīn* call Jesus; see Amir Harrak, *The Chronicle of Zuqnīn Parts III and IV A.D. 488–774* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1999), 330.

were cured by Mārī were also numbered among the men of power, the story of their conversion reflects the same literary motif. The statement that Mārī "baptized the king and the city in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit" (§14) reflects the belief that the Christian message could reach every echelon in the society through the healing power of baptism.

While the *Acts of Mār Mārī* has much in common with the *Acts of Thomas,* it is particularly indebted to the *Teaching of Addai*. Not only does it borrow sections, ideas, and expressions from the *Teaching of Addai* (see D.1. above), but these two sources do *not* share some basic beliefs expressed in the *Acts of Thomas*. For example, they do not reject marriage or consider legitimate intercourse filthy or paint in deep black and pure white the difference made by baptism between "old man" and "new man" or between corruptibility and incorruptibility—all landmark features in the *Acts of Thomas*. Nor did Mārī end his life in martyrdom, as was the case with Thomas and most of the apostles, but died peacefully, surrounded by his followers and designated successor (§33), as was also the case of his own master Addai. In addition, the *Acts of Mār Mārī* and the *Teaching of Addai* convey the message that Christianity spread throughout Greater Mesopotamia triumphally, in contrast to the rejection by the local people of India of Thomas's Christian message, for which he even paid the price of his life. In short, the *Acts of Mār Mārī* borrowed from the *Teaching of Addai* the basic structure of its literary composition, whereas both the *Teaching of Addai* and the *Acts of Mār Mārī* used numerous literary ingredients found in the *Acts of Thomas*.

Overlooking the features of Syriac literary and didactic purposes full of theological symbolism can lead one to draw unwarranted conclusions about such symbolism. Thus, Raabe doubted the accuracy of one passage in the *Acts* in which Mār Mārī was told that he had to "go up the summits of those mountains and the top of the high places [in Babylonia], breaking them up, tilling them, and sowing them to bring plentiful yield!" (§19). Raabe denied the claim that there were mountains in Seleucia.[49] Needless to say, the mountains and summits referred to above are analogies, reflecting the particularly difficult task facing Mārī in his bid to replace "Chaldeanism" with Christianity (§33). For

[49] Raabe, *Geschichte*, 37 n. 1.

similar reasons, several scholars during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries questioned even the historicity of Mārī. In 1889, Duval refused to give any historical value to the *Acts* because, according to him, it did not project a true picture of paganism in Mesopotamia.[50] Duval went too far, given the fact that there are several references to pagan cults in the *Acts* (see the footnotes in the translation), though the references may not be as descriptive or analytical as one might want them to be.

In 1904 Labourt noted the anachronisms in the *Acts* and their "propagandistic" tendency, according to him, and denied "the legend of Mārī" any historical value, though later on he took the holy man for a possible historical figure.[51] Baumstark also referred to the "legendary disciple of Addai."[52] The anachronisms and the confusion in names of kings who ruled over Ctesiphon and Seleucia are due to the lack of early sources dealing with Mār Mārī, though the author of the *Acts* claimed that he was putting into writing "the old tradition that is transmitted in the books" (§6). The mention of schools and "monasteries" supposedly founded by Mār Mārī is a reflection of the conditions prevailing during the time of the author; these institutions did not appear before the fourth century. Although Raabe thought that the geography in the *Acts* could not be reliable,[53] the cities and regions supposedly visited by Mār Mārī were in fact future bishopric, metropolitan, or patriarchal domains. While going through the *Acts,* one gets the strong impression that the writer, who was not aware of the ancient Christian origins of the places he listed, ascribed to Mār Mārī the conditions of the writer's own time. After all, he followed the tradition that he inherited from past generations, namely, that Mār Mārī was the "apostle" of the Church of the East.

Using theological beliefs and literary motifs, the *Acts of Mār Mārī* drew the ideal image of a Christian missionary and projected it onto the person of Mārī. The *Acts* also reflects the respect and admiration of the faithful toward their heroic saint and ultimately invites the question about his historicity and role in the christianization of Babylonia, topics dealt with in the following section.

[50] Duval, *Littérature*, 118.

[51] Labourt, *Christianisme*, 14–15.

[52] Baumstark, *Geschichte*, 28.

[53] Raabe, *Geschichte*, 1.

## F. MĀR MĀRĪ AND THE CHRISTIANIZATION OF MESOPOTAMIA

Not all Syriac sources are unanimous about the role played by Mār Mārī in spreading Christianity in Mesopotamia. In the late sources, such as Bar-Hebraeus in his *Chronicon Ecclesiasticum* II §3, it is Addai who preached Christianity in Persia, Assyria, Armenia, Media, Babylonia, and so forth, in addition to his main mission in Edessa.[54] The *Liber Turris* of Mārī son of Sulaymān also claims that Addai traveled to Adiabene, Mosul, and Bēth-Garmai, short of crediting him with the conversion of Babylonia.[55] Even an East Syriac document of the seventh century makes the claim that Addai spread the Christian faith in the East,[56] though this word could be taken in its general sense and not referring specifically to Babylonia. By contrast, early sources, such as Eusebius, never mention Addai's role in Babylonia.[57]

The *Liber Turris* of Mārī son of Sulaymān claims that Addai took with him his disciple Aḥḥai to Nisibis, and from there he sent him to Qardū, Bēth-Zabdai, Bēth-Huzāyē, Sind, and as far as Gog and Magog.[58] While the *Acts* makes it clear that Mār Mārī converted Nisibis, Nöldeke rightly noted that Saint Ephrem the Syrian (fourth century), a native of this place, never mentioned the name of Mārī in this connection.[59] On the other hand, Chronicle 846[60] and Patriarch Michael the Syrian (thirteenth century)[61] both claim that Aggai, Addai's successor in Edessa, also preached Christianity in Persia, Athōr (Assyria), Armenia, Media, lands around Babylonia, Bēth-Huzāyē, Bēth-Gelāyē, as far as the boundaries of India, and in Gog and Magog.

[54] Fiey, *Jalons*, 38.

[55] Gismondi, *Maris, Amri, et Salibae II*, 2.

[56] Jean-Baptiste Chabot, *Synodicon orientale ou recueil des synodes nestoriens* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1902), 564 (Syr.), 581 (trans.).

[57] Fiey, *Jalons*, 37.

[58] Gismondi, *Maris, Amri, et Salibae II*, 3.

[59] Nöldeke, in his review of Abbeloos's edition of the *Acts of Mār Mārī;* see Raabe, *Geschichte*, 6.

[60] Ernest W. Brooks, ed., *Chronica Minora* II (CSCO T. 3/Syr 3; Paris: E. Typographeo Reipublicae, 1903–1905).

[61] Jean-Baptiste Chabot, *Chronique de Michel le Syrien patriarche jacobite d'Antioche* (4 vols.; Paris: Leroux, 1899–1924), 1:51, 147–51.

Nonetheless, the person most credited with the christianization of Mesopotamia, namely, Babylonia, is none other than the hero of the *Acts* under discussion: Mār Mārī. There are two main reasons why we should also give Mār Mārī this distinction. First, though the *Acts* is relatively late in date and is more literary than historical, it contains historical details that add to its credibility. For instance, rather than claiming that Mār Mārī preached Christianity in Khuzistan in southern Persia, the *Acts* states that trade people brought this religion into their homeland from the West (§31). It is historically true that trade routes were also channels through which religions and ideologies moved, spreading out geographically, and one need not illustrate this with examples.[62] Some merchants must have brought Christianity with them from Syria or Palestine, through the trade route linking Susa, Mesopotamia, Upper Syria, and down to Palestine, attested since distant antiquity.[63] Moreover, the statement that Mār Mārī preached Christianity in Seleucia prior to its destruction by "raiders" also sounds historical. The Roman Avidius Cassius, general of Lucius Verus, burned down Seleucia in 164/5, though he did not totally destroy it.[64] It was Emperor Carus who probably carried out its final destruction in 283, while on an expedition against Persia. Mār Mārī could well have traveled to Seleucia before these two dates. In addition, the topography of Seleucia-Ctesiphon discussed by Fiey is quite supportive of the *Acts,* which states that Mār Mārī was present in this region before the shift in the bed of the Tigris between 79 and 116. Since the Tigris separated Ctesiphon from Seleucia and Kokhe after 116, the insistence of the Syriac sources that Mār Mārī crossed the Tigris from Seleucia to Ctesiphon and Kokhe is unintelligible unless these sources

[62] Syriac Christianity, Judaism, Islam (and, in antiquity, Manichaeism) reached Kerala, India, mostly through trade, and the presence of these religions is still there.

[63] During the early second millennium B.C. and for more than one century, an efficient trade business was conducted by the Assyrians in Cappadocia, which included the exchange and sale of items coming from Babylonia. Worth mentioning in this context is an Akkadian epic (King of Battle—with a historical core?) attributed to Sargon of Akkad (twenty-fourth century) that depicts him campaigning in Asia Minor to protect merchants; see Joan G. Westenholz, *Legends of the Kings of Akkade* (Mesopotamian Civilizations 7; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 102–39.

[64] Dio Cassius, *Roman History* 71.2.

contain an early written or oral tradition reflecting this move.

Second, the *Acts of Mār Mārī* as a whole, with its shortcomings and in spite of its legendary character, highlights the basic belief of the Church of the East that this holy man and no one else was the Apostle of Babylonia. Other sources endorse this belief. The history of Karkha d-Bēth-Slokh (modern Kirkuk) and its martyrs,[65] written between 581 and 637, associated Addai and Mārī with the task of christianizing Adiabene and Bēth-Garmai. Since Addai lived and died in Edessa, Mārī could well have continued his way to southern Mesopotamia. Mār Mārī is also commemorated (alone) in one of the oldest liturgical calendars (tenth/eleventh centuries), as Fiey has noted.[66] Only prominent and local saints are usually commemorated during the liturgical year, and Mārī is one of them. As for the biography of Bar ʿEta, dated to the middle of the seventh century, it dwells on the subject that the East knew God thanks to Mārī, "the Apostle of Truth."[67]

The association of Mār Mārī with Babylonia was not a fascination or obsession of the Church of the East. Not only was Kokhe the cradle of this church,[68] but several ecclesiastical synods took place there as early as 410, and there, too, no less than twenty-four Catholicoi were buried. Even after the patriarchal see shifted to Baghdad during the Abbasid period, the patriarchal election continued to take place in Kokhe, as was the case for Anūsh (d. 884)[69] and Abraham III (d. 937).[70] The elevation to the patriarchal see included a pilgrimage to the grave of Mār Mārī. Thus, after Elijah II was elected Patriarch in 1111, he traveled to the Monastery of Qunnī with his electorates—the bishops. They were all received by the residents of the monastery in a procession headed by the standard of the cross and the gospel;

[65] Bedjan, *Acta*, 1:507–35 (Syr. text); Georg Hoffmann, *Auszüge aus syrischen Akten persischer Märtyrer, übersetzt und durch Untersuchungen zur historischen Topographie* (Leipzig, 1880; repr. Nendeln: Kraus, 1966), 45 (trans.).

[66] Fiey, *Jalons*, 38–39.

[67] Wallis E. A. Budge, *The Histories* of *Rabban Hôrmîzd the Persian and Rabban Bar-ʿIdtâ* (vol. 1; London: Luzac, 1902; repr. New York: AMS Press, 1976), 138:2 (Syr. text).

[68] About Kokhe, see most recently Marica Cassis, "Kokhe, Cradle of the Church of the East: An Archaeological and Comparative Study," *Journal of the CSSS* 2 (2002): 62–78.

[69] Gismondi, *Maris, Amri, et Salibae II*, 82.

[70] Ibid., 90.

the monks held candles and incense, chanted hymns, and covered the path of the newly elected patriarch with rugs and cloths مثل جاري العادة, "as was the custom."[71] Significant, too, is the anaphora named after the apostles Addai and Mārī, which is still in use in the Church of the East today. This is in fact the oldest Christian anaphora ever, dated probably before the christological controversies of the fourth century, though its other title, "Sanctification of the Apostles," suggests that it was originally named after the twelve apostles.[72]

In fact, Mār Mārī is so associated with Babylonia that one of its canals may well have been named after him. The thirteenth-century Geographer Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī mentioned *nahru mārī* "river (= canal) of Mārī," and about it he said that it flowed "between Baghdad and al-Nuʿmāniyyah, emptying itself into the Euphrates, and on which numerous villages among which is Humayniā are located; its mouth is near al-Nīl in the district of Babylon."[73] The *Acts* mentions al-Nīl's canal (§15) but not Mārī's canal, which connects with it, and this name seems unattested outside Yāqūt's *Muʿjam*. The canal's name may not refer to our holy man,[74] but its spelling with a long *alif,* as in Syriac and Arabic (Mār) Mārī, is at least suggestive. The fact that Dayr-Qunnī was located on the east bank of the Tigris about 90 km south of Baghdad, according to al-Shābishtī—he called it the "Monastery of Mār Mārī the Apostle"[75]—and that al-Nīl's canal is also found there reinforces the association of Mārī's canal with our holy man.

Taking together the *Acts* and its historical details, the other Syriac sources calling Mārī the apostle of the East, the topography of Seleucia-Ctesiphon before 116, and the deep conviction of the Church of the East that Mār Mārī was its own apostle, one cannot deny his role in christianizing Babylonia. Though his time frame is more difficult to assert, the early second century is not a far-fetched date.

[71] Henricus Gismondi, *Maris, Amri, et Salibae, de Patriarchis Nestorianorum commentaria I: Amri et Salibae textus* (Rome: Luigi, 1896), 103.

[72] For a detailed study of the anaphora, its edition, and translation, see A. Gelston, *The Eucharistic Prayer of Addai and Mari* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992).

[73] Yāqūt, *Muʿjam*, 5:323.

[74] See the *marī* canal near al-Raqqa in ibid., 5:419.

[75] ʿAwwād, *Diyārāt*, 171.

## G. THE PRESENT TRANSLATION

I have attempted to produce as literal a translation as the English language allows, to be close to the original text. I followed Abbeloos in dividing the text into numbered sections, since Raabe previously did so and since the *Acts* is referred to in modern scholarship in this manner. Variants between the three editions of the Syriac text are placed at the end of the translation but called to the attention of the reader in the Syriac text through half square brackets; one is placed after one variant and two between more than just one variant. In the footnotes I tried to trace the ecclesiastical administration of the places mentioned in the *Acts,* and this task was made easy thanks to the last book published by the late Fr. Fiey, *Oriens Christianus Novus.* I am very grateful to this outstanding scholar of Syriac Christianity, not only for this indispensable tool and his insightful studies of the *Acts of Mār Mārī,* but also because he was at the origins of my own interest in Syriac Christianity: *Requiescat in pace.*

I would like to thank Mr. Nicholas al-Jiloo, of Wakeley, Australia, who kindly accepted to typeset the Syriac text, which he did with professional accuracy. I am grateful to Susan Ashbrook Harvey of Brown University for reading my introduction and making excellent suggestions as to the nature of the literary source that the *Acts* represents. My thanks are also due to John Fitzgerald of the University of Miami for accepting my volume in the series Writings from the Greco-Roman World.

Last but not least, I thank my wife Nagham and my son Ryan for their moral and spiritual support and love.

Toronto 2003

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# *Acts of Mār Mārī the Apostle*
# Text and Translation

# الفاتحة

## ❖ الحمد لله رب العالمين

1 [ب] بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم. الحمد لله رب العالمين. [٥٥] الرحمن الرحيم. مالك يوم الدين. [٥٥] إياك نعبد وإياك نستعين. [٥٥] اهدنا الصراط المستقيم. [٥٥] صراط الذين أنعمت عليهم غير المغضوب عليهم ولا الضالين. [٥٥] آمين.

# THE STORY OF MĀR MĀRĪ THE APOSTLE

**1** Through the divine power, we are writing the story of Mār Mārī the Apostle, one of the seventy (disciples): Our Lord, help me! Amen![1]

Fifteen years after Tiberius Caesar began to reign,[2] and when the three years of the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ among humans had come to their virtuous conclusion, the salvation of all people, those in heaven and on earth, was accomplished at that time. And at the time when the purpose of the Savior's plan of salvation was about to come to fruition, the good news of that divine plan spread rapidly not only among the Jews but also among the Gentiles. They came to our Lord, receiving life, for he was proclaiming to them the hope of the world to come. This they recognized not through mere words but also through deeds. They left him refreshed, since they received from him solutions to their problems and forgiveness of their sins.

For this reason, they truly depicted the image and likeness of our adored Lord in various ways, as one of those who put God on themselves[3] shows, (saying): "When I went some time ago to Caesarea Philippi,[4] I saw there the image of our Savior Christ in body.

[1] This introductory note is found in A and CB. The note confuses Mārī with Addai in that it calls the former "one of the seventy disciples." According to the *Teaching of Addai* it was the latter who was "one of the seventy-two disciples." But this might not be confusion. For the East Syriac church, Mār Mārī was the missionary who was at the very origins of this church. If he was not among the seventy-(two) disciples, he was certainly equal to any one of them.

[2] Tiberius I, Roman emperor, ruled between A.D. 14 and 37. His fifteenth year of reign corresponds to the year A.D. 29.

[3] ܚܣܝܢܐ ܕܐܠܗܐ: Expression referring to true Christians, borrowed from Rom 13:14.

[4] Herod the Great built this city in the North of Palestine, on the Mediterranean.

ܗܘ ܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܡܪܝ ܡܪܝ ܫܠܝܚܐ ܕܫܪܝܪܐ ܀ ܐܬܝ ܠܟ ܒܫܡ ܝܫܘܥ ܡܫܝܚܐ ܘܐܬܪ ܥܡ ܟܠ ܡܢ ܕܐܡܪ ܠܟ ܀ ܘܒܗܝ ܐܬܪܐ ܕܐܢܬ ܩܐܡ ܒܗ ܩܘܡ ܘܨܠܝ ܠܡܪܝ ܕܢܫܪܐ ܠܟ ܀ ܘܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܡܪܝ ܡܪܝ ܫܠܝܚܐ ܕܫܪܝܪܐ ܀ ܐܢܐ ܐܫܬܘܩܩ ܠܟ ܕܬܫܪܐ ܠܝ ܒܗ ܘܐܬܪ ܥܡ ܟܠ ܡܢ ܕܐܡܪ

On the gate of the house of the woman about whom it was written in the Gospel that her blood ran for twelve years,[5] I saw a bronze statue (of the woman) standing on a high stone, her knees bent and her arms[6] stretched forth, begging, as if in reality. Another bronze statue of a man clothed with a cloak stood opposite her, stretching his hand toward this woman. This statue is the likeness of our Savior, as all those who were assisted by our Lord and Savior testified":[7] They fashioned his image in every place with the finest pigments! (These images) stand until now, for at the beginning, the pagans used to honor them simply in this form and in like manner, as if it were a savior. The Good Message of the heavenly kingdom flew not only to the common people but also to royalty, according to what we have learned from old stories.

**2** During the time in which the ministry of the Savior took place, the news of the healing power of our Savior Christ spread to Abgar, the lord of the city of Edessa.[8] This one had a serious illness that was constantly tormenting him—gout in the feet. He heard that our Savior was performing signs and miracles, wrote to him a letter, and dispatched to him envoys and messengers, so that he might come to him and perform healing on him. This is what he wrote to him in his letter: "Abgar Ukkāmā,[9] lord of the land, to Jesus the Savior, peace! I heard that you cleanse lepers, expel impure spirits, and exorcise devils, and I believe that you are God and the Son of God, who came down to heal the creation. I have a serious illness and am asking you to come to me to treat this illness. I also heard that the Jews among your people hate you and seek to do you harm. If you desire it—I have a small city that is suitable for you and me; it would be sufficient for both of us, and we would be at rest in it."[10]

The messengers arrived and entered Jerusalem on the

[5] About the woman see Mark 5:25–34.

[6] Plural, following B and CB.

[7] Story borrowed from Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 7.18.

[8] ʾUrhoy/ʾUrhay in the original text, present-day Urfa in southeast Turkey. About its ancient name, see Amir Harrak, "The Ancient Name of Edessa," *JNES* 51 (1992): 209–14.

[9] Ukkāmā, "the Black." The reference must be made to Abgar V, a contemporary of Jesus, who reigned 4 B.C.-A.D. 7 and once again A.D. 13–50.

[10] The letter, the following reply, and many other details are borrowed from the *Teaching of Addai*. Note that the wording of Abgar's letter above is different from the one in the *Teaching of Addai*.

ܐܝܟ ܕܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܡܪܝ ܐܢ ܒܥܐ ܐܢܬ ܠܡܫܬܐ ܠܗ ܘܐܢ ܠܐ ܒܥܐ ܐܢܬ ܠܡܫܬܐ ܠܗ

twelfth in the month of *Nīsān* (April). They found Jesus in the house of a high priest of the Jews, and the letter was read before him. But our Lord was not in a position to send him messengers, nor was he of the opinion that his Good News should reach the nations before his resurrection. Because of this, he did not send envoys, but made a reply, sending Abgar greetings as follows: "It is written concerning me*: Blessed are those who did not see me but believed in me.*[11] As for now, I am seeking to complete the work of the One who has sent me, but after my resurrection, and after I have ascended to heaven, I will send you one of my disciples who will heal you from your illness and will even grant you and those who are with you life. And your city will be blessed, and no enemy will overpower it."

**3** The letter came to Abgar the king, and he received it with great joy. When they related to him the wonders that were performed by Jesus in the land of Judea, he admired and was amazed by the might of God. Since he was not worthy of seeing these things, he experienced great difficulty. But what did king Abgar do? He found skilled painters and ordered them to accompany his messengers, depict the face of our Lord, and bring the depiction, so as to rejoice with his image as it would be if he encountered him. The painters arrived with the messengers of the king, but they were not able to depict the Lord's admirable human appearance. When our Lord realized[12] through his divine understanding the love of Abgar for him, and as he saw the painters who endeavored to find the image to depict him as he was, but failed, he took a cloth and imprinted on it his face, which gives life to the world, and the image looked like him as he was. The cloth was brought and was placed in the church of Edessa, where it still remains as a source of all kinds of help.

[11] John 20:29.

[12] Omit ܗܘ in A and CB.

4 ܘܟܕ ܐܬܝ ܠܗ ܠܡܪܝ ܡܪܝ ܫܠܝܚܐ ܕܐܢ ܐܝܟ ܕܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܡܪܝ ܐܝܬ ܠܟ ܒܪ ܐܢܫ

**4** After the ascension of our Lord, while the apostles dispersed over the inhabited earth, the grace of God worked. Thomas, one of the Twelve, sent one of the seventy-two disciples, whose name was Addai and who followed Thomas, to the city of Edessa. When Addai arrived there, he resided in the house of a man named Ṭūbānā[13] and began to make miracles. When news about him was heard, Abgar was informed that the disciple of Jesus had arrived there. The king sent after Ṭūbānā, calling upon him, saying: "I heard that a powerful man resides in your house. Bring him up to me now!" Immediately, the man got up and brought Addai to Abgar. The former went into his presence, while a big crowd was before the king. Upon entering, the king saw an awe-inspiring scene in the person of Addai, and he fell down, paying homage to him. The nobility, not realizing the glory, were utterly surprised that a man wearing filthy garments could move the king. But Christ showed the glory of his majesty to Abgar through the one who came to him. Addai said to the king: "Why did you call me?" The king said: "I have heard about you that you perform miracles and signs, and realized that you are the disciple of Jesus who told me in writing: 'After my resurrection I will send you one of my disciples.' Indeed you came to me to heal me!" Addai said to him: "If you believe, your requests will be answered. Everything is granted to the one who believes." Then the king said to him: "I believed in him in such a way that I sought to send an army to destroy the Jews who crucified him, if the Roman kingdom did not withhold me."

Thereafter, Addai placed his hand on Abgar, and all his illnesses were healed through the power of Jesus. Abgar was astonished and even stunned, as Addai performed upon him the wonderful sign—healing from the illness in the feet that is called gout. He also healed one of his servants, whose name was ʿEbed[14] son of ʿAbdū, from an illness that he had. He too got up and then fell down on the feet of the blessed Addai, paying him homage. He also healed their other citizens.

[13] PN Ṭūbānā (lit. the blessed one) is a misreading of the name Ṭūbiā (Tobias) in the *Teaching of Addai* and in Eusebius Τωβίας. Syr. *yod* in ܛܘܒܝܐ Ṭūbiā was taken for a *nun*, as in ܛܘܒܢܐ; such a mistake is common in Syriac mss.

[14] He is ʿAbdū in the *Teaching of Addai* and Ἄβδος in Eusebius.

5 ܗܘ ܕܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܒܫܡ ܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܐܬ ܐܢܬ ܒܪ ܐܠܗܐ ܚܝܐ ܘܡܪܝ ܐܢܐ ܐܬܐ ܠܟ

**5** When the king and his nobility realized the signs that Addai performed, they began telling him: "We beg you to tell us: Jesus, who was he? What did he teach? What did he do?" Addai said to the king: "Time now is late, but if you want, let me tell you: Send out and call upon all your forces and I will come in the morning to relate to you the story of Jesus." The king accepted his order happily and sent to gather all his nobles. Addai came in the morning and started to talk about the divine economy and how (God) created the universe and fashioned human nature and the kinds of promises that he had made to the old[15] generations; about the advent of the prophets and the coming of Christ and the signs that he performed; and about the resurrection and ascension of Christ to heaven and the authorization that he gave to the prophets and the disciples to preach in the nations. And as the Apostle said: The king praised his speech, and *the Holy Spirit confirmed his words by the performance of signs.*[16] Immediately the city and its suburbs converted on account of the signs that occurred at the hands of Mār Addai. After a short while, the whole of Mesopotamia was drawn to faith in Christ. Many among those who accepted the faith strove to virtuous conduct.[17] After he had built the church in Edessa, equipped it with whatever it deserved, and appointed priests and deacons in the city and in its suburbs, Addai the Apostle left this world in peace on Thursday, the fourteenth of the month of *Iyyār* (May), ending his lovely contests with the trophy of victory.

**6** So far were (the stories) about the conversion of Mesopotamia.[18] Let us now turn our attention to show how the fear of God moved from there to our own territories. Because this story is not told clearly, I am putting into writing the old tradition that is transmitted in the books, as follows.

[15] Translation in agreement with Raabe, *Geschichte*, 18 n. 1.

[16] Paraphrase of Mark 16:20.

[17] ܟܝܢܐ ܕܚܝܠܐ is a technical term often referring specifically to ascetic practices, as in this particular case.

[18] Sentence found in A and CB. Mesopotamia here is Upper Syria or the Jazīra of the Arab sources. The phrase "our territories" in the following sentence refers to the lands of Assyria and Babylonia proper, of which the writer was native.

ܐܝܟ ܡܢ ܕܥܒܪ ܠܗ ܡܪܝ ܡܪܝ ܫܠܝܚܐ ܕܥܡ ܟܠ ܚܕ ܘܚܕ ܒܟܠ ܐܬܪ ܘܐܬܪ ܕܐܙܠ ܠܗ ܒܫܠܡܐ ܘܒܚܝܠ ܫܦܝܪ ܘܒܢܨܚܘܢ ܟܒܝܪ ܘܐܬܝ ܠܒܝܬ ܐܒܘܗܝ

Before the blessed Addai died, he selected one of his disciples named Mārī,[19] who was living in the love of God and was adorned with virtuous manners. He placed his right hand on Mārī, as conferred to him by our Lord Jesus Christ, and sent him to the eastern region, to the land of Babylonia, ordering him to go and preach there the word of our Lord.

**7** The blessed Mār Mārī left Edessa to begin preaching until he reached the city of Nisibis.[20] After the blessed one converted the city of Nisibis, planted[21] in it the truth of the true faith, overthrew its idols, and shattered its statues, he built in it churches and monasteries and set teachers and a school.[22] From there, he moved to the land of Arzen,[23] with Anasimos the priest who came with him from Edessa, along with Philippus, Malkīšōᶜ, and Addā—his disciples[24]—as well as with many other people. He dispatched one

[19] According to *Liber Turris,* Mār Mārī was not only one of the seventy disciples; he was also Hebrew in origin; Gismondi, *Maris, Amri, et Salibae II,* 2; see the appendix, p. 84.

[20] Cuneiform Naṣibina, classical Nisibis and Antiochia in Mygdonia, a city located on the Jaġjaġ River, to the west of the Tigris. In antiquity Nisibis and Edessa were major caravan cities situated along a trade route linking Mesopotamia with Upper Syria and Anatolia. Before the Arab era, Nisibis was a border city, separating Roman/Byzantine Syria from Parthian/Sassanian Mesopotamia. Nisibis was a bishopric see since the early fourth century, made famous by its illustrious bishop James of Nisibis (308/9-after 338). In the early fifth century, it became the Metropolitan city of Bēth-ᶜArabāyē; see Jean-Maurice Fiey, *Nisibe, métropole syriaque orientale et ses suffragants des origines à nos jours* (CSCO 388, Subsidia 54; Louvain: Secrétariat du Corpus SCO, 1977).

[21] ܫܕ and ܫܕܐ constitute a wordplay, as also suggested by Raabe, *Geschichte,* 19 n. 2.

[22] This school probably refers to the famous academy founded by Mār Narsai in Nisibis near the end of the fifth century, though a more modest school must have existed before that time; see Arthur Vööbus, *History of the School of Nisibis* (CSCO 266, Subsidia 26; Louvain: Secrétariat du Corpus SCO, 1965), 7–32.

[23] Arzania of the cuneiform documents and Arzanene of the classical sources, the chief city of which was Arzen. The land is located to the north of the confluence of Bokhtan with the Tigris. According to Bar-Ṣalibi, it was Aggai who preached Christianity in Arzanene and Sophanene, the latter being located along the course of the Euphrates-Arsanias (Murad-Su); see Chabot, *Chronique,* 4:93 (Syr.) 1:149 (trans.). In the early fifth century Arzen was a bishopric see under the jurisdiction of the Metropolitan see of Nisibis.

[24] Mār Mārī had other disciples, including Ṭūmīs (§11), Daniel (§31), Papa, and Job (§32).

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of the latter—Philippus by name—to Qardū.[25]

When the blessed one reached the city of Arzen, he converted many people through the mighty acts that he was performing. Now the king of Arzen was stricken by the disease called gout.[26] When he heard about the miracles and healings that took place at the hands of the blessed one, with great eagerness he ordered that they should bring the blessed one before him. When Mār Mārī came and went into the presence of the king, the latter greatly rejoiced in him, because the blessed one bowed down happily before him. And when the king heard the word of the blessed one, he held him in increasing honor, because of his gentleness, humbleness, and joyful countenance—for Mār Mārī was very meek and very kind toward everyone, and in him jealousy and anger had no place whatsoever. The king said to him: "Tell me! What is your religion? For I believe you are a god!" Then the blessed Mār Mārī answered and said to the king: "God forbid! I am not God, O my lord the king, but *I am a man,*[27] servant of the Living God. My religion is Christianity, and I believe in Christ, the Son of God, who descended at the end of times from heaven, and turned the world away from the deception of the demons by which it was seized.[28] I confess this One, O my lord the king, I perform these things in his name, bringing erring people (to God and)[29] to the faith." The king answered and said to him: "According to your claim, can your Lord, therefore, heal this illness with which I have been stricken for a long time?" The blessed one said to him: "If you believe in him, your requests will be answered."

[25] Qardū is a region located to the west of the Upper Tigris, adjacent to Jazīrat ibn ʿUmar of the Arab sources, nowadays in Turkey. It probably corresponds to classical Corduene, in which Strabo, *Geogr.* 16.1.24, located Sareisa, Satalka, and Pinaka. The latter is the Phenek of the Syriac sources. It was a bishopric see since at least 424, when the first attested bishop (Miles) appears in literary sources; Jean-Maurice Fiey, *Pour un Oriens Christianus Novus: Répertoire des diocèses syriaques orientaux et occidentaux* (Beiruter Texte und Studien 49; Stuttgart: Steiner, 1993), 120.

[26] ܓܕܝܢܐ This is the disease suffered by King Abgar and probably by his officer ʿAbdū, according to the *Teaching of Addai* and as seen above, p. xx. The account about the king of Arzen is an echo of the account about King Abgar.

[27] Acts 10:26; 14:15.

[28] Compare with Acts 14:15.

[29] Words between parentheses are in A only.

ܐܡܪ ܠܗܘܢ ܀ ܐܝܟܐ ܕܐ ܕ ܀ ܐܬܐ ܒܗ ܒܪ ܐܠܗܐ ܐܠܐ ܗܘ
ܐܝܬ ܠܗ ܫܘܡ ܫܡܐ ܐܠܐ ܐܝܟ ܕܐ ܫܡܗ ܐܝ ܀ ܐܡܪ ,ܐܝ
ܟܬܝܒ ,ܡܣܟܢܘܬ ܗܘ : ]ܥܕ ܕܥܒܕ ܫܡ ܐܝ ܡܫܬ ܀ ,ܡ ܐܝܟܐ
ܐܠܐ : ܐܠܐ ܡܫܬ ܐܬܐ ܀ ܠܟ ܠ ܫܡ ܫܠܝܛ
ܒܠ ܀ ܐܬܐ ܡܢ ܐܬ ܫܡ ܐܝܟ ܀ ܐܡܪ ܐܢ ܐܡ
ܐܠܐ ܫܡ ܐܠ ܫܡ ܐܝܟ ܀ ܒܠ ܐܠܐ ܐܠ
ܐܠ ܫܡ ܐܝ ܀ ܐܡܪ ܒܗ ܐܠ ܐܠ ܐܡ ܐܝ :
ܐܡܪ ܒܗ ܐܠ ܀

8 ܐܠ ܫܡ ܫܡ ܐܠ : ܐܠ ,ܐܡ ܐܬ ܐܡܪ ܀
ܐܠ ܐܠ ܐܡ ܀ ܐܡܪ ,ܐܡ ܐܬ ܐܡܪ ܐܠ ܫܡ
ܐܬ ܐܠ ܐܡ ܀ ܐܡܪ ,ܐܬ ܐܡܪ ܐܠ ܐܠ ܫܡ
ܐܬ ܐܠ ܫܡ ܀ ܐܡܪ ,ܐܬ ܐܡܪ ܐܠ ܐܠ ܫܡ
ܐܠ ܐܠ ܐܡ ܀ ܐܡܪ ,ܐܬ ܐܡܪ ܐܠ ܐܠ ܫܡ
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Immediately, the king kneeled and bowed down before the blessed one, begging and saying: "My Lord, I believe! Help me!" At this point the blessed one came close and placed his hand on the spot, saying: "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, whom the Jews crucified in Jerusalem, *get up on your feet*!"[30] Concomitant with the word of the blessed one, the king was healed, and was baptized along with the members of his house. When the entire city realized that the king was healed, they too came to the blessed one, and he healed their bruises. He thus converted the whole city, built in it a church, and appointed over it priests and deacons.

**8** From there he left again and came to the land of Bēth-Zabdai.[31] There he converted most of the local people, and from there the blessed one left for the land of Bēth-ʿArabāyē,[32] where he made many conversions. From there, he went down to the land of Erbil[33] and Athōr.[34] Now the king of Erbil was stricken with *lepra leonina*[35] of Ahazia—leprosy that people abhor and hate very much—and his left hand was paralyzed. When the blessed Mār Mārī went into Erbil, he began to sow in it the seed of life.

The people of the city, along with the worshipers of idols who were in it, cried out loudly, screaming and saying: "From where did this one who abolishes our gods come to us?" Then they

[30] Acts 14:10.

[31] A land located between Qardū and Bēth-ʿArabāyē, on the west bank of the Upper Tigris. It corresponds to Zabdicena of Ammianus Marcellinus 25.7, 9, a land to the right bank of the Tigris, opposite Qardū. The first two known bishops in Bēth-Zabdai lived during the middle of the fourth century, both deported in 359 and martyred at the hands of Shapur II; Fiey, *Nisibe*, 165–66.

[32] This "Land of the Arabs" was located in upper Mesopotamia, between Mosul, the Tigris, and the Khābūr, and had Nisibis as its center.

[33] Assyr. Arbaʾilu and modern Arbīl, in the north of Iraq, the capital of the province of Adiabene. It is located on the east side of the Tigris between the two Zāb Rivers. The early history of Christianity in Erbil is shrouded in mystery, but it possibly became a Metropolitan city as early as 310, with the appointment of Papa; Fiey, *Répertoire*, 79. Otherwise, the Synod of 410 declared it as a Metropolitan see, occupied in that year by Metropolitan Daniel.

[34] In Syriac sources, Athōr refers to the heartland of ancient Assyria, around its capital Nineveh. Nineveh itself was a village on the top of Tell Nabī Yūnis (see below, note 47) during the first Christian centuries.

[35] ܟܣܝܐ ܕܐܪܝܐ ܕܐܚܙܝܐ, lit. "The disease of the lion of Ahazia." The disease gives its victim features reminding one of a lion. Ahazia (cf. 1 Kgs 20:37) may be a mistake for Hezekiah, who fell ill to the point of death, though nowhere is it mentioned that he suffered *lepra leonina*; cf. Isa 38: esp. 1 and 21.

ܡܢ ܕܐܬܐ ܠܗ ܠܡܪܝ ܡܪܝ ܫܠܝܚܐ

went into the presence of the king and talked to him, informing him about what was taking place at the hands of the blessed one. When the king heard about these things, he grew agitated. He sent after Mār Mārī, who was quickly brought into the king's presence. The king answered and said to him: "What is this that you are abolishing the gods and teaching about the one God—as people say and as we have heard—whom the Jews hung on a stake at the time of Herod?" Then the blessed Apostle Mār Mārī said: "That he was killed, as you have heard, by the Jews who hate the truth, and that he was also buried: the matter is true! That he rose up from the tomb, ascended to heaven in glory and sat to the right side of the Father: you are not aware, O king! Now that miracles will be done at my hands in his name, you will be assured that he is the only true God, and there is none besides him." The king answered and said to him: "What miracles can your God do?" The blessed Mār Mārī said to him: "Everything is easy for powerful God. Everything, which you ask of him in faith, you will receive." The king said to him: "If you heal the illness with which I am stricken, I will believe in Christ and in his apostles." Then the blessed one replied and said to the king: "Be patient with me for a short while." He kneeled down and said: "I beg you, God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! Heal this servant of yours!" The blessed one took oil and water, made over them the sign of the cross of the Lord, and gave them to the king. As he drank from it and anointed himself with it, he was healed, his flesh becoming at once (like that) of a small child. As for his hand, the disciple seized it with his own hand, and it immediately stretched forth.

**9** There was there a military commander of the king, whose name was Zaradosh.[36] When he realized that his lord the king was healed, he cried out saying to the blessed one: "Blessed be your Lord who sent you to us, to heal our bruises. Blessed be Christ whom you are announcing. May his glory be blessed, and his honor be higher than that of all other creatures. May he be worshiped forever in heaven as on earth." Then he lowered his head before the blessed one and beseeched him and begged him, saying that he had an only son to heal,[37] for the spirit that was inhabiting that child was torturing him in such a way that they

[36] ܙܪܕܘܫ: Persian name "Zoroaster."

[37] Compare with Luke 9:38.

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**10** ܐܡܪ ܠܗ. ܐܡ ܐܢ ܐܬܐ ܐܡܐ ܗܘ. ܐܡ ܐܢܐ ܐܡܪ ܠܐ ܐܬܐ
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had to chain him with two chains.[38] The name of that child, who was very handsome, was Daway.[39] The Apostle Mār Mārī said to him: "Go and bring your child here, so that you may realize the love of my Lord Christ for him." When the child came in, he screamed loudly and foamed at the mouth, and the demon[40] threw him down as if he were dead.[41]

Then the Apostle Mār Mārī drew near to him, and said to that devil: "I order you, accursed demon, in the name of Jesus Christ who overthrew your power and who is now destroying you,[42] get out of this creature of God, without harming him in any way!"[43] The accursed demon shouted, saying: "Where do you order me to go?" The blessed one said to him: "Go with all your company to Lower Tartarus!"[44] Then that accursed demon came out, turned as it were into a dark whirlwind, and was never found again. Then the child stood up, praised God, and fell at the feet of the blessed Mār Mārī the Apostle and kept kissing them.

**10** On the same day, the king and all the members of his family, Zaradosh and his son Qardway and all their relatives, the eunuchs[45] of the king, and all his nobles were baptized. Realizing the signs and the miracles that were performed, one high priest of the king and the members of his family believed in our Lord. They threw down the idols, which they used to worship, and smashed them, throwing their dust into the Greater Zāb.[46] Mār Mārī won the entire region of Athōr and Nineveh[47] to the

[38] Compare with Mark 5:4.

[39] ,ܕܘ , called ,ܩܪܕܘ (Qardway) in §10.

[40] ܫܝܕܐ: Akkadian *šēdu* always in pair with *lamassu*, both protective deities. In Assyrian literature and art, both referred to the winged colossi placed at gates and entrances. But even in Akkadian, there was a bad *šēdu*, possibly the ancestor of the *šēdā* in Syriac literature.

[41] Compare with Mark 9:17, 20, 26.

[42] Compare with John 12:31.

[43] Luke 4:35.

[44] ܬܚܬܝܐ ܓܗܢܡ, "bottom of hell." The first Syriac word is Greek Τάρταρος "the netherworld, Hades" and in Greek mythology the part of Hades that was reserved for evildoers. The second word is the equivalent of the Greek term "the nether (world)."

[45] See Acts 8:27; Matt 19:12.

[46] For the identification of this branch of the Tigris, see note 48 below.

[47] Nineveh during the first centuries of the Christian era was a mere village located on the top of Tell Nabī Yūnis. The Tell was once part of the great Assyrian capital, being the arsenal of King Sennacherib. Nineveh was a bish-

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true and glorious faith.

The miracles that Mār Mārī had performed in the region of the (two) Zāb (rivers)[48] are many. The mouth is indeed not able to relate them, nor can books contain the signs, miracles, and wonders that our Lord performed through his hands.[49] Let us not be surprised, my beloved ones, and say that he was the last among the apostles, for Paul was chosen after all the other apostles.[50] Though in terms of selection he was the last of (all) the apostles, the region, which became his lot, testifies about his greatness, for he is numbered with Simon Kepha. For Paul converted the first among all other cities, Rome. He too converted the most important among the lands within the (four) regions of the whole world, bringing them to the faith in Christ.[51]

**11** The blessed Mār Mārī came down from the Greater Zāb and entered one village named Brūgiā,[52] located on the other bank of the Zāb toward the land of Erbil, another one located at the other bank toward the east, named Raʿamsīs,[53] and yet another village below the latter, called Wāzīq.[54]

opric see since the middle of the sixth century, as far as sources can tell us, with Aḥudemmeh being the first attested bishop. After the Arab invasion, Mosul became a Metropolitan see, possibly along with the bishopric see of Nineveh; Fiey, *Répertoire*, 122, 115.

[48] Two branches of the Tigris, mentioned in cuneiform sources as *Zābu elītu* and *Zābu šaplitu*, ("Upper Zāb" [also called "Greater Zāb"] and "Lower Zāb"), and with similar forms in Syriac and Arabic sources. Note that the two names were also given to two canals in Babylonia; see §30.

[49] Cf. John 21:25.

[50] See 1 Cor 15:8–9.

[51] The passage is not clear. Since the author compared Mār Mārī with St. Paul, the words "this one too" must refer to Mārī. Since Rome was the first and foremost city in the West, it makes sense for the author to consider Seleucia-Ctesiphon as the counterpart of Rome in the East. ܟܠܗ ܕܪܝܫ is not a pleonasm, as Raabe suggested in *Geschichte*, 24 n. 6. In this context the Syriac word refers to the "cardinal points" of the world.

[52] ܒܪܘܓܝܐ: Unknown.

[53] ܪܥܡܣܝܣ: As a place name, this form is attested only in the Bible; see Exod 1:11. Raabe, *Geschichte*, 42 n. 8, suggested Bēth-Raʿaman, though rightly with hesitation.

[54] ܒܐܙܝܩ: The place is also called Bēth-Wāzīq, Arab. Bawāzīj. The Syriac name had a Persian counterpart, Kunia (Shapur). In Mārī, it is called Ikōniyā on the basis of the Persian name; Gismondi, *Maris, Amri, et Salibae II*, 61. The city was located on the east bank of the Lower Zāb, in the province of Bēth-Garmai. Its first known bishop is named John the Physician, who administered it

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While the blessed one was traveling in the land of Erbil, working on conversion, our Lord appeared to him one night in a dream,[55] saying: "Send your disciple Ṭūmīs to the land of Dasen,[56] so that he might go and turn its people away from their error." For their land and their religions were very obscene: some worshiped trees and others worshiped stones and sources of water, to such an extent that they used to make their sons and daughters pass through fire,[57] as the citizens of Athōr and Erbil used to do. Then Mār Mārī placed his hand on Ṭūmīs his disciple and sent him to the lands of Dasen and Zawzan,[58] as far as Outer Armenia[59] and the regions of Media,[60] where the blessed Ṭūmīs died in martyrdom for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. Thus the blessed disciple of Mār Mārī the Apostle was crowned in the land of Gawar,[61] on the first of the month of *Tammūz* (July), a Friday,

between 661 and 680. Before it became a bishopric see, the see was located at Maḥoze d'Arewan, to the south of the Lower Zāb, and was under the jurisdiction of Bēth-Garmai since 410; Fiey, *Répertoire*, 68, 106.

[55] Compare with Acts 18:9.

[56] ܕܣܥ: Region located to the west of the Greater Zāb and to the south of ʿAmādiyya. Aḥḥā-dābūy, who was appointed bishop over it in 410, is the first attested in literary sources. Its bishopric see was under the jurisdiction of Adiabene; Fiey, *Assyrie*, 2:787.

[57] There is no evidence that this practice existed in ancient Assyria or anywhere in Mesopotamia. If one takes "passing through the fire" literally, one might think of the ordeal attested in ancient Babylonian laws, though here the ordeal was by the river and not by the fire. Otherwise, the claim may have been made on the basis of the Bible; see 2 Kgs 23:10.

[58] ܙܘܙ: in the region of Dasen, according to the *Acts*. Yāqūt, *Muʿjam*, 3:158, after Ibn al-ʾAthīr, mentions an extensive region to the east of the Tigris called al-Zawzān, which "began at about two days march from Mosul and extended to the borders of Khilāṭ, and on the Adharbayjan side it stretched to Salmās." Syr. Zawzan does not fit this description, but it may correspond to the Zawzān of al-Muqadassī, which was a *nāḥia* "district" in Jazīrat ibn ʿUmar; see M. J. De Goeje, ed., *Bibliotheca geographorum Arabicorum. Pars tertia: Al-Moqadassi* (Leiden: Brill, 1906), 137.

[59] ܐܪܡܝܢܝܐ ܕܓܘ: The part of Armenia located between Adiabene and Media, hence the land around Lake Urmia, where Ṭūmīs was martyred. Khilāṭ, on the west shore of Lake Urmia, became a Metropolitan see in 893. As a bishopric see, a few of its bishops are known by name since the eighth century.

[60] Media, the land located to the east of Mesopotamia and north of Iran.

[61] Could it be the same as Guwer, south of the Greater Zāb, not far away from its junction with the Tigris, in Adiabene?

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in the third hour.[62] His grave became a source of benefits that remains until today.

When the blessed Mār Mārī entered the village of Brūgiā, he converted a man—the king's chief of the Magians—who was governing there. Because the chief of the Magians heard that the king and all his nobles had converted, he too accepted the faith and was baptized, along with the whole city. Then he passed to Raʿamsīs and Wāziq, which he converted through the opening of the eyes of two blind people—notable people who were there. There he built churches after the names of Peter, Paul, and Addai the apostles.

**12** From there the blessed one took the road to the land of darkness and error, the country of Bēth-Garmai.[63] First he went into the city of Shahqirt,[64] where there was a pagan king, very harsh and frightening. By the time the blessed one went there, a tree in which Satan was dwelling was being worshiped, and slaughtered animals were also being offered to a bronze statue. The king Shahgird[65] had no child except for a daughter named Phraṭia, who was very dear to him. But she was tormented by a serious illness—paralysis—and was unable to do anything or to walk. The Apostle Mār Mārī and those who were with him came

[62] Raabe, *Geschichte*, 25 n. 5, doubted the fixed chronology. Abbeloos, *Acta*, 70 n. 1, noted that Ṭūmīs was not attested in Syriac historical sources. Both scholars are understandably critical, but the reference to the grave of Ṭūmīs should be taken seriously. There may have been a holy man of this name who was commemorated in literary sources not available to us. On the other hand, fixed chronology is always subject to caution, and in this particular case there may be a wordplay involving Ṭūmīs (the martyr) and *Tammūz* "July."

[63] ܒܝܬ ܓܪܡܝ: Arab. بَا جَرْمَا (Bā-jarmā), territory located to the east of the Tigris, between this river, the Lower Zāb, and the mountains of Ḥimrīn and Diyālā. Its center was Karkh-Selokh "Citadel of the Seleucids" or Karkha (modern Kirkuk in Iraq). Bēth-Garmai may have been a Metropolitan see since the third century, if not earlier, having its center possibly in Shahrgird (see the following note). The three earliest bishops of Karkha lived during the reign of Shapur II (339–379) and were martyred by him. After the first quarter of the ninth century, the see was transferred from Karkha to Shahrzūr; Fiey, *Répertoire*, 63.

[64] ܫܗܪܓܝܪܕ: For Mid. Pers. Shahr-gird (lit. "City of the king"), a town located to the east of Kirkuk, but its exact location is not known; Fiey, *Assyrie*, 3:130–33. Its first known bishop was Narsai, who was martyred in 343. Others are mentioned in the Acts of the Synods, beginning with the year 410; Chabot, *Synodicon*, 672. The city lost its importance in the late twelfth century; Fiey, *Répertoire*, 131.

[65] ܓܘܕܢܙ (ܓܘܕܢܙ in §13, p. 28:21). Note that the city name is also a royal name, a case that is not necessarily impossible but still surprising.

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in and settled before the gate of the king. Mār Mārī drew near the gate of the royal house and knocked at it. A little girl responded, saying: "Who are you?" The blessed one said to her: "Open[66] for us the door, my daughter, and take from us this bit of flour, knead it, and bake for us unleavened bread, so that you would be remunerated with a reward on our account, for we came from afar and could not buy bread in this village!" The little girl said to him: "I cannot stand up to open the door for you, for my hands and feet are paralyzed, and all the members of the house have left to offer slaughtered animals to the gods." The blessed one replied and said to her: "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may your limbs be restored to health!"[67] While the mouth of the sublime Mār Mārī was still uttering the words, every single illness that was in her left her, and she stood up immediately and opened the door with joy and amazement. She replied, saying to him: "What can I do for you, man? The order of our king and that of our kingdom thus decrees that no one can set fire for baking during three days dedicated to the gods, and he who dares the contrary, he and everything he has would be destroyed by the fire." The blessed Mār Mārī said to her: "Fear not, there is no one who can burn you with the fire!" As he said this to her, she took the flour from Mār Mārī, set the fire, and was ready to bake. But with the work of Satan, the smoke went up above all the roofs of the city, and those in charge of the king's order saw it. When they came to investigate, they learned that the fire was set in the house of the king.

**13** They came and stood before Shahgirad the king, seeking to talk to him, but they were afraid. When he saw them he asked them: "What are you talking about?" They said to him: "Our lord[68] the king, behold! The smoke is going up from your palace, as if it were from a furnace!" As he was pondering that there was no one in his house except for Phraṭia his daughter, he got up shaking and in terror and came to his house with ten of his nobles. They went in with him in fear and immediately ran to the furnace. And they saw his daughter, who had never walked before, standing near the furnace, and the blessed Mār Mārī sitting

[66] Read ܦܬܚ instead of ܦܬܚ found in the Syriac text; see also Raabe, *Geschichte*, 26 n. 3.

[67] Read ܩܡ ܘܗܠܟ instead of ܩܡ ܘܗܠܟ of the Syriac original, or ܩܡ according to Acts 3:7; see Raabe, *Geschichte*, 27 n. 1.

[68] According to A and B ,ܡܪܝ, "my lord."

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there. The king was startled for a while, then replied and said to the blessed one: "Who are you?" Mār Mārī said to him: "I am a man, servant of the Living God." The king said to him: "Who reestablished the health of this little girl, giving her strength, a thing that even our gods could not do?" The blessed Mār Mārī replied and said to him: "Christ, whom she is serving,[69] has performed the healing of the king's daughter." The king said to him: "And who is this Christ whom you mentioned?" The blessed one said to him: "The Son of the Most High and Living God, Creator of heaven and earth and of all creatures." The king said to him: "And these gods of ours, why do they not give health to the sick ones?" The blessed one said to him: "Because they are not gods, but idols and statues in which demons dwell, driving people astray, lest they come to know the Living and True God." The king grew furious, because Mār Mārī's words implied that he was worshiping demons![70]

He seized the blessed one and brought him to the idols' shrine in question, where all the citizens of the city were gathered. The king said to the blessed one: "If your God is better than these gods, and since you said that he is invisible, dwells in heaven, and performs miracles and signs, go in and bring out the demon whom you mentioned, so that I can see him[71] and believe in your God." The blessed one replied and said to the king: "Is it true, O king, that if I bring him out to you, you would believe in Christ?" The king said to him: "Yes!"

**14** The blessed one called Addā his disciple and said to him: "Go in and bring out for me this accursed deceiver who dwells in these statues, along with all his fellows." Addā went in, following the order of the blessed Mār Mārī, and said to those demons: "Thus says Mār Mārī, the apostle of Jesus Christ: 'In the living word of our Lord Jesus Christ, you have no right to come into the presence of all the people except in a hideous appearance!' " And in the presence of the king and all the people who were gathered there, the demons came out in various likenesses, such as unclean beasts and insects. They were seventy-two in

[69] ܚܠܝܟ: It could be a mistake for ܚܠܝܟ or ܐܢܐ ܚܠܝ, "I am serving," as Raabe also suggested; *Geschichte*, 28 n. 1.

[70] Lit. "Because he said to him: 'You are worshiping demons.' "

[71] For Raabe, *Geschichte*, 28 n. 5, the pronoun referred to God and not to the demon, but this is only a possibility.

ܡܢ ܕܝܢ ܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܡܪܝ ܥܡ ܟܠ ܗܢܐ ܐܢ ܐܢܬ ܪܚܡ ܠܝ ܐܢܐ ܐܦ ܐܢܐ ܪܚܡ ܠܟ ܘܐܢ ܐܢܐ ܠܐ ܐܫܬܘܩ ܠܡܫܬܐ ܡܢ ܐܝܕܟ ܐܠܐ ܐܢ ܐܬ ܐܢܬ ܠܝ ܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܫܡܥܘܢ ܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܐܝܟ ܕܐܡܪ ܐܢܬ ܠܝ

number, and screamed in lament and said: "Oh! You, son of Mary! Lo! You have filled the whole world with your teaching,[72] and you will not desist before you drive us out into the wilderness[73] and desolate places! We do not know where to go now!" The blessed Mār Mārī shouted at them, saying: "You have no right, in the word of our Lord, to let us hear your voices! Go to gehenna, for the fire is ready for you and for your worshipers!" When the king heard these things, a great fear befell him. He rushed to the blessed Mār Mārī, kneeled down, and paid him homage, saying: "Great is Christ our God! We have no God other than him!" Our father, the Apostle Mār Mārī, ordered the demons to go to the abyss.[74] He baptized the king and the city in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. As for the furnace of the king's house, they dug it to the water level. The blessed Mār Mārī built a church, and above[75] that furnace which they turned into a well, he built the baptistery. The well is the baptistery until today, as people testify, and great signs are being done through that water.

**15** He went from there to the region of Darabad,[76] and the time was summer. When the blessed one and those who were with him grew tired, because of the hot journey, he sought a place to sit and rest. He found outside the village a place named Gelālā,[77] which means spring of water, so they settled there near the water. Above that spring there was a fig tree, worshiped by the people of that region. It was awesome and was bearing fruits that no one could consume because of the demon who was dwelling in it. And anyone who would eat from the fruits of that fig tree would be stoned by the demon. When the day turned cool, the blessed one

[72] Cf. Acts 5:27: "you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching."

[73] See Mark 1:24.

[74] Luke 8:31.

[75] ܡܠܥܠܝ: sic. Read ܡܠܥܠ ܕܝ, as Abbeloos suggested; *Acta*, 79 n. 1.

[76] ܕܪܒܕ: Also written ܕܪܒܕ, as read above. It was located in the northeast of Iraq, not far away from Shahrzūr, south of Shaqlāwā. At the beginning of the tenth century, Darabad, which was under the jurisdiction of Adiabene, shifted to the Metropolitan see of Bēth-Garmai; Fiey, *Répertoire*, 73.

[77] ܓܠܠܐ: Lit. "Valley," hence "spring of water" of the Syr. text, by approximation. It is also written ܒܝܬ ܓܠܠܐ, Ḥerbath-Gelāl (see note 80), a bishopric see located in the north of Bēth-Garmai. One bishop possibly administered the town in 310, but more bishops are mentioned in the Acts of the Synods since 410; see Chabot, *Synodicon*, 672. The last attested bishops lived at the end of the eleventh century; Fiey, *Répertoire*, 92.

ܫܠܝܐ ܕܡܪܝ ܕܐܬ ܥܡ ܟܠ ܐܢܫ ܕܐܬ ܒܗ ܡܫܝܚܐ. ܘܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܡܪܝ ܝܫܘܥ: ܫܠܡ ܠܟ ܫܡܥܘܢ ܟܐܦܐ ܕܫܡܝ ܐܦ ܐܢܐ ܐܫܠܡ ܠܟ ܒܫܡܗ ܕܐܒܝ ܕܫܠܚܢܝ. ܘܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܫܡܥܘܢ: ܡܪܝ ܐܢܬ ܝܕܥ ܟܠ ܡܕܡ ܐܢܬ ܡܫܠܡ ܠܝ ܒܫܡܗ ܕܐܒܘܟ ܕܫܠܚܟ. ܘܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܡܪܝ ܝܫܘܥ: ܫܠܡ ܠܟ ܫܡܥܘܢ ܒܪ ܝܘܢܐ ܕ

went up to see how far he was from the city. He fixed his eyes to look, and lo! A child of about fourteen years of age was lying down dead! The blessed one held that child by the hand and said to him: "Child,[78] Jesus Christ resurrects you!" Immediately, that child stood up and paid the blessed Mār Mārī homage. The blessed Mār Mārī asked him, saying: "Who killed you, my son, and threw you in this steppe?" The child said to him: "I came close to this house of our god so as to eat from its fruits, and his commanders attacked me and stoned me, killing me." The blessed one turned toward that fig tree and said to the demons: "O stubborn ones, why are you misleading people to kill them? Because of this I am telling you, in the living word of God, you have no right to stay in this tree, nor in this place!" He sent them from there to the Nile River[79] and cursed that fig tree, and it was uprooted. The blessed one moved from there, and (before) entering the village he spent the night around it. In that same night the demons screamed, saying: "Gelāl is ruined! Gelāl is ruined![80] Behold! We are leaving!" All the inhabitants of the village heard (them), and so did the house of the king.

**16** In the following morning, the blessed Mār Mārī sent his disciple Addā so as to go into the marketplace and buy bread. Addā went in and tarried there. The blessed Mār Mārī and those who were with him got up and went after him, finding him sitting opposite the gate of King ʾĀdār.[81] Anasimos, one of the disciples of the blessed one, spoke and said to him: "Why are you sitting here? Are you not afraid of and terrified by the order of our master, whom you left since this morning up until now, without a thought of returning?" Addā replied, saying: "Forgive me! When I came into the market, I could not see bread in it. But a woman saw me and said to me: 'Come with me and get what you are looking for.' And she entered this house, and lo! I am waiting for her!"

[78] CB: "... and said to the Child: Jesus ..."

[79] Not the Nile of Egypt obviously, but a canal bearing the same name located beside the town of al-Nīl in Babylonia. The canal started with Nahr-Mārī "the river of Mārī," no doubt the Mār Mārī of our *Acts*. For the canal see Yāqūt, *Muʿjam*, 5:323; see also the introduction, page xxxvi.

[80] ܓܠܠ ܒܝܬ: (See note 77). The story given above is probably a folktale revolving around this composite toponym, the structure of which (ruins + GN) is well known in the Near East (e.g., Khirbet Qumran).

[81] ܐܕܪ: Aram. month name, "March."

ܐܝ ܕܒܝܬ ܡܠܟܐ ܐܬܝܢ ܒܚܕ ܒܫܒܬܐ ܒܥܠ ܣܦܪ ; ܡ ܟܬܒ ܐ
ܒܝܬ ܐܠܗܐ ܒܫܡܝܐ ܐܦ ܒܪ ܐܢܫ ܠܐ ; ܐܡܪ ܐܢܐ ܠܟ
ܠܡ ܐܡܪ ܐܠܐ ܒܫܡܝܐ ܠܐ ܒܥܠ ܐܠܗܐ ܐܠܐ ܒܪ ܐ
ܒܥܠ ܐܠܗܐ ܐܠܐ ܒܫܡܝܐ ܠܐ ܐܦ ܒܪ ܐܢܫ ܠܐ ܐ
ܒܝܬ ܠܐ ܐܡܪ ܐܢܐ ܠܟ ; ܐܡܪ ܐ ,ܒܫܒܬܐ ܒܥܠ ܣܦܪ
ܒܥܠ ܐܠܗܐ ܒܫܡܝܐ ܐܦ ܒܪ ܐܢܫ ܠܐ ܐ
ܐܡܪ ܐܢܐ ܠܟ ; ܐܡܪ ܐ ,ܒܫܒܬܐ ܒܥܠ ܣܦܪ

While they were talking, behold! That woman came out and with her, the bread! The blessed Mār Mārī asked her, saying: "This palace, whose is it?" She replied and said to him: "This is the court of our king." While they were talking, lo! The king's daughter was brought out from one courtyard to another, supported on her right and left sides by slaves. The blessed Mār Mārī asked them: "What is the matter with this young girl?" Her slaves said to him: "She has been struck by this illness for many years." As the blessed one looked at her, he pitied her. He spoke and said to her: "Young girl, I say to you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, get up on your feet!"[82] Concomitantly with his command, her feet and all her body members grew firm.[83] Trembling, she walked and fell upon the feet of the blessed one and kissed them.[84]

The king, her father, was at that time hunting. A bearer of glad tidings went after him and said to him: "You must be unaware! God has caused you a great joy today!" He said to him:[85] "What?" He[86] said to him: "A man clad with a fiery cloak![87] With one word from his mouth, your daughter recovered from all her sicknesses!" (The king) immediately stood up and returned with him.[88] He drew near the gate and saw the blessed one, his daughter, and a big crowd sitting there. At his order, the blessed one went into his presence. The king asked him: "Who are you: a god or a man?" The blessed Mār Mārī said to him: "My lord the king: I am not a god, but a man, servant of the Living God!" The king said to him: "What is your teaching, and what are the deities whom you worship, that all of these admirable things and healings are being performed by them?" The Apostle Mār Mārī said to him: "We are Christians in teaching and confession. We worship Christ, Son of God, and in his name we perform these things."

Immediately the king ordered that all the sick people of the city be gathered in his presence and asked the blessed one to per-

[82] See Luke 8:53.

[83] Abbeloos, *Acta*, 83, took ܐܬܥ as *paʿel* (*confirmavit*), but for Raabe, *Geschichte*, 33 n. 2, it should be in this case ,ܐܬܥ. Nonetheless, the first form can also be a phonetic spelling of the second one.

[84] Compare with Luke 7:38.

[85] Written "them" in the Syriac original.

[86] Written "they."

[87] In the image of the Seraphim; see Isa 6.

[88] Written "them" in the original.

ܡܫܚ ܠܗ ܫܘܒܚܐ ܒܪ̈ܝܫܐ ܕܡܠܐܟ̈ܐ ܩܕܝ̈ܫ̈ܐ ܕܐܝܬ̈ܝ ܥܡܗ ܒܫܡܝܐ ܘܒܐܪܥܐ ܘܒܬܚܘܬ ܐܪܥܐ ܘܟܠ ܕܒܗ̈ܘܢ ܐܢ̈ܫ̈ܐ ܘܟܠ ܒܥܝ̈ܪ̈ܐ ܘܟܠ ܕܒܗ̈ܘܢ ܚܝ̈ܐ ܘܟܠ ܕܙܚ̈ܠ̈ܐ ܒܬܚܘܬ ܐܪܥܐ ܘܟܠ ܕܒܝ̈ܡ̈ܐ ܘܟܠ ܕܒܗ̈ܘܢ ܡ̈ܝ̈ܐ ܘܟܠ ܕܒܐ̈ܝ̈ܪ̈ܐ ܘܟܠ ܕܒܗ̈ܘܢ ܥ̈ܦ̈ܪ̈ܐ ܘܟܠ ܕܒܗ̈ܘܢ ܒ̈ܥ

form signs before him and before his noble men, mainly so that he could ascertain faith in Christ for himself. The sick and the healthy people gathered—men, women, and children, and absolutely the entire nation—to witness the miracles and mighty works to be performed at the hands of the blessed one. Then the blessed Mār Mārī sent all the stricken ones away, healed in the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Then they shouted before the king, saying: "The God whom this man announces is greater than all the gods! He is the only God in heaven and on earth!"

**17** On that same day, that city converted along with King ʾĀdār. The blessed one left Addā in the territory of Darabad,[89] while the blessed Mār Mārī and his entourage left for the Persian territory, where he made many conversions. The other kingdom of the Persians, which had ended at the hands of Ardashir,[90] had not yet begun.[91] Now the cities and territories of Babylonia and Persia were full of small kings, but the Parthians were ruling the territory of Babylonia. At that time, the Parthian Aphrahaṭ son of Aphrahaṭ[92] was reigning in Babylonia—in Seleucia[93] and Ctesiphon[94] in Bēth-Arāmāyē.[95] At the same time, these (two cities) were extremely prosperous prior to the destruction of old Seleu-

[89] Written Dar-Abar; see note 76.

[90] Ardashir founded the Sassanian dynasty, which began to rule ca. 224, after he defeated the last Parthian ruler Arṭaban V (213–224). Ardashir died in 242, whereas the Sassanian dynasty collapsed at the hands of the Arabs in 651.

[91] See the introduction, page xiv.

[92] He may be Phraates V son of Phraates IV, who died at the beginning of the first century A.D.; Tacitus, *Ann.* 6.31–32. He is too early to be the contemporary of Mār Mārī.

[93] Seleucus I Nicator "one of the servants of Alexander" built this city, according to *Liber Turris*; see the appendix, p. 85.

[94] Ctesiphon was located on the east bank of the Tigris opposite Seleucia. The remains of the city, including an impressive *ʾīwān*, can still be seen in the site nowadays called Salmān Pāk, located south of Baghdad. Ctesiphon was built by the Parthians, but *Liber Turris* claims that al-Madāʾin (Ctesiphon of the Syriac sources) was built by Samiram(is), the queen of Babylonia. The detail about Samiramis "of Babylonia" (Shammu-ramat of the Assyrian sources) is based on Greek sources, in which Babylonia and Assyria were often confused.

[95] Bēth-Arāmāyē, "the Land of the Arameans," is a reference to the land of Babylonia, called Asuristan in Persian sources and Nabaṭ in Arabic sources. In the ecclesiastical administration, it was the patriarchal province of the Church of the East with Seleucia-Ctesiphon as center.

18 ܟ ܕܗܝ ܪ̈ܒ ܡܘܕܥܡ ܪ̈ܒܚܝܠ ܡܬܕܥ ܪ̈ܒ ܐܝܟ ܕܗܝ, ܕܗ, ܕܗ, ܟܗܝܘܗܟ
ܟܗܝܢܟ ׃ ܫܗ ܠ ܐܦ ܠܥܗ ܠܥ ܠ ܫܗ ׃ ܟ̈ܬܘܬ ܘܪܟܟܗ ܟ̈ܝܬ̈ܝ ܘܪܟܟܗ ׃ ܠܟܗܝ
ܟ ׃ ̈ܪ̈ܝ . ܘܠ ܕܥܘ̈ܝ ܠ̈ܗܝ ܘ̈ܪ ܪ̈ܟܗ̈ܘ̈ܝ ܘ̈ܪ ܪ̈ܟܗ̈ܘ̈ܝ ׃ ܐܟ. ܘܗܠ̈ܐ: ܗ̈ܟ
ܟ ̈ܡ ܡ̈ܐ ׃ ̈ܪ̈ܟ ̈ܡ ׃ ̈ܪ̈ܟ ̈ܡ ׃ ̈ܪ̈ܟ ̈ܡ

cia[96] by raiders.[97]

**18** After the blessed Mār Mārī had returned from the territories of the (As)syrians,[98] he came down to Bēth-Arāmāyē, beginning with the region of Rādān.[99] First he entered a village named Abad,[100] where he converted a man—the chief of that place and owner of much wealth—named Laqnā,[101] along with his entire family. Because of him, many people, his kinsmen, people of his region and settlers, accepted the fear of God. Mār Mārī[102] then built churches and monasteries for the faithful in all of the chief's towns located above Seleucia and Ctesiphon, and in the rest of the villages of Rādān; according to tradition, they were 365 in number. And behold! His memory has been transmitted up until today from all of these places. After he confirmed the people of Rādān[103] in the fear of God and established for them priests and

[96] "Old Seleucia" here is in contrast with "New Seleucia," a name given by the East Syriac writers to the nearby Kokhe, the cradle of Babylonian Christianity.

[97] The raiders are the Romans, who under Avidius Cassius burned down this Hellenistic city in A.D. 164/5; Dio Cassius, *Roman History* 71.2; see the introduction, page xxxiv.

[98] ܣܘܪܝܝܐ: "Syrians," but since Mār Mārī conducted his mission in the Assyrian heartland, as seen above, this term must refer to the inhabitants of that land, the Assyrians.

[99] ܪܕܢ: This is the name of a branch of the Tigris, known in cuneiform sources as Radānu and nowadays as al-ʿAḍīm. The river name was given to the region east of the Tigris, to the north of Seleucia and Ctesiphon as suggested by the *Acts*. The Acts of the Synods mention a bishopric see called ܪܕܢ in 410 and 424; Chabot, *Synodicon*, 680. It fared during the patriarchate of Timothy I (780–823) up until the eleventh century; Fiey, *Répertoire*, 122–23.

[100] This common Persian toponym may be a shortened form meaning "the city of + royal name."

[101] He is Halqānā (Aram. name referring to a kind of flower) in *Liber Turris* (appendix, p. 85), the wealthy man who built 360 "churches, convents, and monasteries" in Rādān, endowing them with property (but see the following note). His other name Laqnā (lit. "basin") given above may be a hypocoristicon. As for the 360, it is a round number meaning "many" and should not be taken literally.

[102] Lit. "he." This pronoun refers to Mār Mārī and not Laqnā, despite the claim made by *Liber Turris* (see the previous note). Raabe, *Geschichte*, 35 n. 6, rightly said the same.

[103] Written wrongly ܪܕܟ in A and B.

ܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܡܪܝ ܐܠܗܐ ܕܐܒܗܬܢ ܕܫܡܝܐ ܢܬܩܕܫ ܫܡܟ ܬܐܬܐ ܡܠܟܘܬܟ ܢܗܘܐ ܨܒܝܢܟ ܐܝܟ ܕܒܫܡܝܐ ܐܦ ܥܠ ܐܪܥܐ ׃

ܘܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܠܚܡܢ ܠܝܘܡܐ ܕܝܢ ܡܬܝܗܒ ܠܢ ܘܫܒܘܩ ܠܚܘܒܝܢ ܕܟ ܐܝܟ ܕܫܒܩܢ ܐܢܚܢܐ ׃ 19

ܘܠܐ ܬܥܠ ܠܢ ܠܢܣܝܘܢܐ ܐܠܐ ܦܨܝܢ ܡܢ ܒܝܫܐ ׃ ܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܡܪܝ ܐܠܗܐ ܕܐܒܗܬܢ ܕܫܡܝܐ ܕܐܦ ܐܢܐ ܐܫܒܘܩ ܠܟ ܠܚܘܒܝܟ ܐܝܟ ܕܫܒܩܬ ܠܗܘܢ ׃

ܘܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܡܪܝ ܐܠܗܐ ܕܐܒܗܬܢ ܕܫܡܝܐ 

deacons, one of the sons of the named Laqnā,[104] along with many other people, followed him.

**19** They came down to the city of Seleucia, which was located on the Tigris. Because Christianity did not exist in the region, nor could they find anyone who would receive them in his house for God's sake, the blessed one and those who were with him rented a house and settled in it. The people of Seleucia were evil pagans. Mār Mārī passed through the whole of Seleucia, but no one followed him. He realized that they had no concern other than eating, drinking, and getting drunk. As soon as the wine of the day before lost its effects, they hastened to drink the wine of the following day. He could not tell them God's word because they were found drunken at all times. When he realized that no one followed him, he wrote a letter and sent it to the city of Edessa in Mesopotamia, to his colleagues the apostles. Thus he wrote: "The land to which you have sent me is evil and full of thorns. Its people are arrogant and hard. I am not able to work them and sow (in) them (the word of God). And now if you order me, I would come to you or I would go to another place." The apostles took counsel among themselves and made the right decision, concerned about the lives of (Seleucia's) citizens, lest they perish. They wrote a letter to the holy Mār Mārī, which contained the following: "You have no right to come here or to go elsewhere before you go up the summits of those mountains and the top of the high places, breaking them up, tilling them, and sowing them to bring plentiful yield!" When the blessed Mār Mārī realized that he had nowhere to go, he pondered about what he would do.

Now there were three assemblies[105] in Seleucia, one for the elders, one for the young people, and one for the children, for this is how they organized their assemblies. The blessed one thought to stir up controversy at the assembly of the elders:[106] "If it would

[104] The wording in CB is ܪܘܡ ܡܚܢܐ ܕܩܠܢܝ ܫܡܗ, lit. "the son of Halqānā whose name was," but the son's name is not available.

[105] ܟܢܫܐ and in *Liber Turris* فخر : Both the Syriac and Arabic terms are from Akkadian *puḫru,* "assembly," of the free citizens, found in the major cities of Mesopotamia. The assembly was the landmark of Mesopotamian culture throughout three millennia; see the introduction, section D.4, pp. xxii-xxvi.

[106] ܟܢܫܐ ܕܣܒܐ and in *Liber Turris* فخر المشايخ. This technical term in Syriac and Arabic corresponds literally to Akkadian *puḫru ša šībūti,* "assembly of the elders," in reference to the adult citizens of the free class in the city. *Liber Turris* gave the reason why Mārī opted for the assembly of the elders: these were

ܠܟ ܕܡܠ ܠܟ ܫܡܥ ܠܡܐ ،ܡܬܬܡܗܪ ܕܡܫܠ ܠܗܘ ܐܡܪ ،ܕܡܫܝܚܐ
ܐܝܟܘ ܕܡܫܚ ܒܥܠܡ ܕܐܬܐ. ܐܬܒܥܐ ܐܢ ܐܝܟ ؛ܐܡܝܢ ؛ܐܡܝܢ ؛ܐܡܝܢ
ܕܐܡܢ ܐܬܐ.

20 ܘܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܡܪܝ ܐܡܪ ܠܢ ܡܝܟܐ ܐܝܟ ܐܢ ܐܬܐ ܕܐܡܪ
ܐܡܪ ؛ܐܡܪ ؛ܐܡܪ ،ܐܡܪ ،ܐܡܪ ،ܐܡܪ ،ܐܡܪ ،ܐܡܪ ،ܐܡܪ ،

be possible, I would hunt their souls starting from this place!" He went to them, and they placed him below all of them, for they were saying: "This man is a foreigner."[107] And he joined them in singing and in merriment every day.

**20** After a while, the president of the assembly[108] fell sick. He gave order to his household concerning who, among his family, would inherit from him; and necessities for the burial were even prepared for him. The whole city came to visit him, and when the crowds departed from such visits, the blessed Mār Mārī would go in to pay him a visit too. When this sickness persisted, the blessed Mār Mārī said to him: "I shall put my hand on you in the name of the true God, and you shall be healed!" Because the man could not answer, for he was near dying, Mār Mārī got up and put his hand on him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. At that very moment, the sick man saw heaven opening up! He saw a man, looking like the blessed Mār Mārī, coming down and taking his hand to make him rise. The man was immediately healed, and he left his bed. Then the blessed Mār Mārī spoke to him, saying: "Become a Christian!" The man said to him: "What is Christianity? Are you introducing a new god into the world?" Mār Mārī said to him: "God is not new, because he exists from the beginning and is everlasting. He created heaven, the earth, the seas, and all that is in them. He cannot be understood, nor can he be comprehended. And the Son who was begotten from him shares his nature, and his generation cannot be probed or understood by humans, for he is the light of his divinity. He sent him to the world so that through him it (humanity) would come to know his Father and that through one Holy Spirit, who had spoken through the prophets, eternal salvation would take place. They are three true persons, equal in every regard, containing all that is seen and unseen, almighty, judging everyone. This is the salvation of the Christians, and in the name of this one (Christ) we do everything: healing the sick and expelling evil spirits from people." Then the man said to the blessed one: "Did God take a woman and have a

more flexible than the youth and the children (see the appendix, p. 85).

[107] The historical assembly in Mesopotamia was made of the local free men. Foreigners were admitted only temporarily and were probably placed at the very end of the convention, as mentioned in the *Acts*.

[108] ܪܫ ܟܢܫܐ and in *Liber Turris* رئيس الفحر: The Syriac and Arabic titles correspond literally to Akkadian *rab puḫri*.

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son from her?" Mār Mārī said to him: "The first generation of the Son of God did not occur through a woman, but he was generated from the nature of the Father (who is) power and wisdom. He is a true God, Son of God like a true God." Then the president of the assembly[109] believed in the words of the blessed Mār Mārī and was converted along with the members of his family. He baptized them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Then the man rose up and went to his assembly, and remained there as he had in the past.

**21** After some time again, the deputy[110] became sick to death like his colleague. In like manner, the blessed Mār Mārī went to visit him along with those who went to visit him. Mār Mārī said to him: "I shall put my hand on you in the name of my God, and you shall be healed!" That man could not talk to him because he was about to die. Now before his eyes he looked and he too saw heaven opening up and a man, looking like the blessed Mār Mārī, coming down and taking his hand to make him rise, and he and the members of his family were converted. And he went to the assembly and reclined on his seat as before. The blessed Mār Mārī too went and reclined on his seat in his place as before. The people who were converted said to each other: "This man is a god!" The president of the assembly said to the whole assembly: "My brothers, listen to me! When I was sick, I saw in a vision heaven opening up, and a man looking like this one came down and made me rise from my sickbed!" The president of the assembly said to the deputy: "Because we were healed of our sicknesses at his hand, the place where he is now sitting no longer befits him, for his place is at the bottom. But if we bring him up to us, the citizens of Seleucia will grow angry, because he is a foreigner. So now, let a servant bring a pillow and let him place it for him between you and me!"[111] And they did as they said.

[109] ܐܒ ܩܫܝܫܐ.

[110] ܐܒ ܡܢܚܟ and in *Liber Turris* خليفة رئيس الفحر. The Syriac term refers to the head of a military unit or to a prominent person, but its Arabic rendering means "deputy of the president of the assembly." Akkadian does not offer a term that translates the Syriac one, and certainly not in the context of the Mesopotamian historical assembly.

[111] Apparently the pillow (on which the people reclined) was a mere symbolic gesture and was not used by Mār Mārī. *Liber Turris* made it clear that the holy man remained in his lower seat; see the appendix, p. 86.

22 ܘܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܡܪܝ ܡܪܝ ܫܠܝܚܐ ܕܐܠܗܐ ܗܘ ܕܢܫܪܐ ܒܗ ܐܢܫ ܘܠܐ ܢܡܘܬ ܠܥܠܡ ܐܡܝܢ ܐܡܝܢ ܐܡܪ ܐܢܐ ܠܟ ܕܐܦ ܐܢ ܐܢܬ ܬܫܐܠ ܡܢ ܐܠܗܟ

**22** After a time came Mār Māri's turn among them to do his (food) service, and those who had converted said to him: "It is your service now, and therefore, you should take care of the food[112] and of the wine." For there was a custom in Seleucia according to which the one who did the service had to bring food, wine, perfume, and musicians from his house. "So give the food and the wine now, and we will provide the musicians and the perfume." Mār Mārī said to them: "Tell me ahead of time indeed, and I will do whatever you want me to do!" So he wrote a letter to the apostles, his colleagues, which he sent to the city of Edessa. He wrote to them as follows: "As I wrote to you in the past, the land to which you have sent me is full of thorns and thistles that I cannot tread under my feet, nor could I step upon the mountains and hills that are in it! And you wrote to me: 'You have no right to come here or to go elsewhere until you have subjected the mountains and the hills that are in it, have sown in it the living seed, and have sent from the fruits of its produce to heaven!' When I realized that I had no other choice except to do so, I went to take my seat in the assembly of the elders and associated myself with them in eating, drinking, and singing like them. And through the help of God and through your prayers I converted among them the two presidents of the assembly. Now my turn to do the (food) service, as is the custom among them, has come. Send me now from the gold that you have, as well as skilled singers from there who can sing nicely and the finest anointing oils, so that I will be able to do as they themselves do, because I have nothing here!" When the light-clad apostles heard these things, they rejoiced and sent him gold as he requested from them, along with fragrant herbs, tambourines, harps, cymbals, and all kinds of instruments that had no equal in Seleucia, and they reached the blessed Mār Mārī in Babylonia.

**23** When the day of service came, he did such a great service that no one in Seleucia had performed anything like it. And after the whole assembly had eaten and drunk, he ordered the singers to come in, and the singers went in and sang hymns in such a way that the three assemblies were deeply moved. They said concerning the holy Mār Mārī: "This man is a god, because he is different in every regard!" All of them came near the blessed

[112] ܠܚܡܐ Lit. "bread."

ܒܝܬܗ ܘܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܕܐܢ ܐܝܬ ܠܟ ܚܠܡ ܐܚܪ[ ]ܕܐܦ ܫܘܒܚ
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ܟܬܒܐ ܕܐܝܟ

Mār Mārī and said to him: "We beg you that these singers remain here and that they should not return to their regions. And whenever your turn comes up to do the service, your service will be remitted against the wage of the singers." The holy man said to them: "I do not embezzle the wage of the singers, but if you want, I have one word to tell you and so listen to me!" They said to him: "Speak!" He said: "Become Christians, and these singers will be yours!" They too asked him, saying: "What is Christianity? We have never heard this name at all!" He said to them: "Have faith in God the omnipotent, who created heaven and earth—there is no God other than him—and in his Son Jesus Christ who descended from heaven and assumed the body of the human beings whom he brought to himself. And believe in the Holy Spirit, she[113] who placed in our hand the mighty things and the healing of the presidents of your assembly." And he continued to say to them: "Those whom you worship now, leaving aside the worship of your Creator, are not gods, as you believe. Therefore, give up this error and believe in one true God. The fire that you serve is but one of God's creatures, and it is dumb and far from godhood." They asked him: "Where is your God?" He said to them: "My God is invisible and dwells in glory in the highest. He does whatever he wants." They replied and said: "This fire is also our goddess. She is light and capable of burning. She sees us, and we too can see her. We do not agree to worship that which is invisible." The blessed Mār Mārī said to them: "With the power of my God the invisible, I am able to kill your goddess, and she will not be able to do harm to me. Hence, you will learn that she is not a goddess, but dead at the hand of a pitiful man! Do not count on her!" They

[113] The Syriac word "spirit" is grammatically feminine, and hence the Holy Spirit is also feminine. Nonetheless, Syriac writers often attributed feminine characteristics to this person of the Holy Trinity; see Sebastian Brock, "Come Compassionate Mother. . ., Come Holy Spirit: A Forgotten Aspect of Early Eastern Christian Tradition," *Aram* 3 (1991): 249–57.

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24 ܘܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܡܪܝ ܐܠܗܐ ܕܐܒܝ ܗܘ ܐܝܟ ܕܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܡܪܝ ܐܠܗܐ
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said to him: "(If) you stand up to stone her and blow sand and water in her, or extinguish her, then we are also able to do the same. But if your God is more powerful than her, give proof of this accordingly: Enter her blaze, and if you can kill her while you are not burned down, it will be known that your God is greater than she and he is more powerful than she!"[114]

**24** The valiant holy man, trusting in his Lord, agreed to their request. The day after, after they kindled a great blaze in their furnace, all of them gathered to the place and asked him to go into it, some addressing him in a terrorizing manner and others kindly. The holy one made the sign of the redeeming cross on himself and made the sign of the cross on the fire too, and entered into it and came out without harm. Some of the people believed in the divine miracle, but others said: "The fire was not set fittingly." Upon their disagreement, the holy one told them[115] that on the next day he would go into it (once again) so as to end (their) skepticism, and thus he agreed to comply with their wish the next day. They burned the fire vehemently, for they were inflamed by error, while Satan, who from the beginning was man's killer and his archenemy,[116] was following them closely. In a like manner, he entered it again with the sign of the cross and began to extinguish it. Nonetheless, they asked him not to extinguish it but to keep quiet until it died out by itself. He did accordingly until it died out and was extinguished, and he came out from it without harm. Upon realizing the divine miracle, they believed in God and accepted the sign of life.[117]

On the morning of the following day, the king went out to sit down on the place that was prepared for him, and a great crowd of people gathered near him. Some began to slander the saint and others to praise him. The king spoke and said to the slanderers: "What do you want?" They said to him: "That you deliver him to

[114] This account echoes the story of the fiery furnace in Dan 3:19–30 (Peshiṭṭā).

[115] ܐܡܪ ܠܩܕܝܫܐ ܗܘ One would expect ܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܠܩܕܝܫܐ (or the like), "and they said to the holy one," to fit the context better; see also Raabe, *Geschichte*, 44 n. 5.

[116] See John 8:44.

[117] The reference is to baptism.

ܒܝܬ ܡܫܝܚܐ ܘܐܬܝ ܠܗ ܠܡܪܝ ܡܪܝ ܫܠܝܚܐ ܕܫܠܡ ܠܗ ܒܫܠܡܐ ܘܐܡܪ

us so that we may kill him or that you drive him out of our land. But if you do not do so, then all of us, servants of your gods and the gods of your ancestors, will move out of the city." When the king saw that most of the people sided with the pagan priests, he calmed them down, saying: "I will only do what you tell me (to do)." And he dismissed them from his presence. The king said to the blessed one and the people who were with him: "My brothers, I know that the people of Seleucia are evil and malicious, especially those who perform the burnt offerings who are in the city. If they do not see a multitude of miracles, they will not submit to me quickly. Therefore, go out now my brothers and show them the might of Jesus whom you are proclaiming."

As soon as the blessed one came out of the presence of the king, two blind men met him. He touched the pupils of their eyes, saying: "In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, let the pupils of your eyes be restored!" Immediately those two blind men acquired sight and believed in him, and most of the other people followed him. Likewise, when the blessed one heard from people who came to him about the daughter of the prefect who was in the city, whom Satan had been tormenting for a long time, he went with them. By means of the mouth of the little girl, the demon kept screaming, saying, while all the local people were listening: "O you servants of Christ! You are driving us away from every place: cities, mountains, heights, and deserted ruins!" After he said these and other similar things he threw the girl down. The blessed Mār Mārī drew near and prayed, then returned the girl to her parents healed and giving thanks. Those who witnessed the miracle fell on the feet of the blessed one, paying homage to him.

**25** The blessed one worked hard for one whole year on the conversion[118] of Seleucia, through signs and miracles. Then he asked them for a place where he could build a house of worship for the Living God. They answered and said to him: "Ask for whatever you want, and we will give to you." The holy man

[118] Written "on the miracle."

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said to them: "Give me the pagan temple located outside the city, and take its price." Now that temple was of King Aphrahaṭ, and many priests were in charge of it.[119] Much money used to be spent on the (idols) and on the priests, claiming that the idols ate and drank. The blessed one went with the king and entered the temple. Mār Mārī spoke and said to the pagan priests: "O impudent liars! When did these idols, which you call gods, ever eat? Are you not ashamed? Have you not enough of eating and drinking whatever is offered to them? Though you say that these are deities, they are not deities as you claim, but statues of wood and bronze inside which the demons speak!"

At this point the priests grew angry and said to the blessed one: "If you claim that these are dumb things, what do you have to say about the sun-(god), the great judge?"[120] The blessed one said to them: "The sun is also a creature of the Living God. It was placed in order to enlighten the universe, which God had created, and to distinguish between the day and the night. If it is a deity, where would it flee during the night?" After much discussion the king ordered, and the temple was given to the blessed one. As for the idols, the king gave them to the blessed one as a gift. Mār Mārī took them, ground them as fine as dust, and threw their powder into the Tigris. He demolished the temple of idols and instead he built a small church, establishing in it priests and deacons. In the same place he also founded schools and appointed one of his disciples in charge of the teachers.[121]

**26** When the pagan priests[122] realized that their hideous doctrines began to lose ground in the city and in the villages around it, all of them gathered and crossed over to Ctesiphon, to King Arṭaban,[123] who was ruling from Ctesiphon and

[119] The following story is partially modeled on the story of the idol Bel in Dan 14:1-22.

[120] For the people of ancient Mesopotamia, the sun-god was indeed the god of justice, as is clear in the Code of Hammurabi.

[121] The school of Seleucia was not known before the fourth century. It may have been founded even later, by Mār Ābā (540–552); Labour, *Christianisme*, 290–91.

[122] Lit. "servants of the burnt offerings."

[123] Arṭaban II reigned between A.D. 18 and 38, too early to be the contemporary of Mārī. Also, the claim that he reigned in Ctesiphon at the same time that Aphrahaṭ was ruling over Seleucia is unbelievable.

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Gokhay[124]—the king was said to be very harsh. They screamed before him, saying while weeping: "A certain sorcerer came and abolished our gods, proclaiming only one God, who, as he taught, was in heaven and was invisible. And now, O lord the king, if you will not take care of your soul and the faith of your fathers, little by little this will cease, for King Aphrahaṭ of wicked mind believed him immediately. As for us, he put us out of his house!" When king Arṭaban heard these words, he sent after the blessed one, and they made him cross over from Seleucia's side to where King Arṭaban was residing. The king said to him, as he entered into his presence: "What is this unrest and division that you caused in our land? And what about the foreign gods about whom you are preaching to our people, according to their testimony in deed? Now if you give up your religion and confess these deities, you will receive from me great gifts. But if you do not agree, you and everyone who confesses your God will be cut into limbs." The blessed one said to him: "The God whom I serve, O king, will save me from your punishments, because he is able to give life and to cause it to perish, and he heals all kinds of sicknesses and ailments: he makes the lepers pure, opens the eyes of the blind, drives away devils, and everything depends on him." The king replied and said to the valiant hero: "If you are able to do these things, confirm your words with deeds! Fulfill your teaching with actions! I have only one sister, who is very dear to me. If you are able to heal her,[125] I will give you a share in my kingdom!" At this point the blessed one said to him: "If you will believe in him after your sister has recovered, your request will be granted." The king said to him: "I will believe in him!"

**27** The blessed one agreed to go to the king's sister. At this point the king ordered soldiers and commanders to bring the blessed one to where his sister was. When the blessed one arrived

[124] Gokhay, a bishopric see to the south of Bēth-Garmai, is most probably confused with the very familiar Kokhe. According to the late Fr. Fiey, when the Tigris changed its bed it separated Kokhe from Ctesiphon, linking it with Seleucia. The Tigris changed its bed between A.D. 75 and 106, and this date was the time frame of Mār Mārī's missionary activities in Babylonia, according to Fiey (*Jalons*, 41ff.); see also the introduction D.5., p. xxvi-xxvii.

[125] She was struck with leprosy, according to *Liber Turris*; see the appendix, p. 86.

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at a river named the Middle Zāb,[126] he could not cross it, for the ferryboat was on the other side of it. He heard the voice of someone talking inside the ferryboat. The blessed Mār Mārī called upon him, saying: "Bring over for me this ferryboat." The man said to him: "I cannot take you across the river." The holy one replied and said to him: "Why are you not able to take me across the river?" The man said to him: "My hands and feet are injured, and I am not able to hold the oars or the vessel." The holy one said to the man: "What is your name?" He said: "My name is Dausti." Holy Mār Mārī said to the priest Anasimos, who accompanied him: "Say to that man: Mārī, disciple of Addai the Apostle, says to you: 'In the name of Jesus of Nazareth stand up on your feet, seize the oars with your hands, and drive the ferryboat across the river!' "

As soon as the message of Mār Mārī was sent to Dausti, this man was healed. And he brought the ferryboat, and the blessed Mār Mārī and all those who were with him crossed over. But Dausti had another ailment: he was constipated.[127] When Dausti realized that he was healed concomitantly with the holy one's word, he said to him: "My lord, I know that you are a god, for you have healed my hands and my feet with one command by your hand. Now I have another ailment: I am constipated." The holy Mār Mārī said to Dausti: "Will you become Christian and confess the true God?" Dausti replied and said to him: "What is Christianity? I see that you are teaching about a new god in the world, though I thought you were a god, coming down to visit humanity."[128] The blessed one spoke and said to Dausti: "Far be it that I should be God! I am not God but the apostle of his apostles." Dausti said to the blessed one: "Tell me, what is Christianity?" He said to him: "This is Christianity: We believe in one true God—his self-being is hidden, he cannot be fathomed by creatures, his Fatherhood cannot be understood by his creation, and his lordship is not made—in the One Son deriving from him—his genesis

[126] Not the Middle Zāb in the north of Mesopotamia, but a branch of a canal in Babylonia between Baghdad and Wāsiṭ. The canal was called the Upper Zāb, linking the Euphrates with al-Nuʿmaniyya, and its branch was named the Middle Zāb; see Yāqūt, *Muʿjam*, 3:124; see also note 133.

[127] Lit. "his anus was plugged." Compare with Acts 28:8, where Paul is said to have healed Publius of dysentery.

[128] Compare with Acts 14:11.

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cannot be scrutinized by people, he wanted to assume the human body, giving life to the world through the mercy of he who sent him—and in one Holy Spirit, the completion of godhead. Do not think that by mentioning three names, we distinguish three gods from each other. Though the Father exists in his person, the Son who derives from him also exists in his person, and the Holy Spirit who derives from the Father exists in his person, Godhead is but one. If you believe, believe in this manner!"

After he said these things to Dausti, the latter replied and said to him: "I believe." Then the blessed one called a boy and said to him: "Bring me some water in the cup—a spoonful!" He brought it to him and he dripped in it some oil that was with him, stood up and prayed. He begged our Lord Jesus Christ and thus said in his prayer: "Yes, our Lord Jesus Christ, you healed obstinate sicknesses and diseases, purified lepers, opened the eyes of the blind, set free the tongues of the tongue-tied, caused the crippled to stand up and they walked like stags, and sent your twelve and your seventy apostles to the world. Now too, O Lord, I beg you, and do answer me. Cure this man's constipation." After the blessed Mār Mārī finished his prayer, he gave the oil and the water to Dausti, and he drank of them and was healed.

**28** Mār Mārī departed from there and came with those who were with him to the place to which he was sent, called Dūrā-d-Qunnī[129]—named[130] after the name of Qunnī.[131] Before entering there, he kneeled down before God in prayer, thus saying: "Our Lord Jesus Christ, I beseech you and beg you, grant me, my Lord, the ability to enlighten this dark region through your might, and the people, my Lord, who never knew you. Grant them, my Lord, knowledge that you are the only true God, that you want all the people to turn toward the knowledge of your truth." Suddenly a voice was heard, saying; "Thus will be, following your request!

[129] Town where Dayrā d-Qunnī, also called Dayr (Monastery of) Mār Mārī, was located on the east bank of the Tigris, about 90 km south of Baghdad. Both the town and the monastery were included in the territory of Bēth-Dārāyē, Arab. Bādārāyā or Badrāyā, located 150 km to the south and southeast of Baghdad. One bishop of Qunnī is mentioned in the Synods of 410, 420, and 424. The bishopric see of Bēth-Dārāyē is attested after 420 and until the twelfth century, when it fell under the jurisdiction of Kashkar; Fiey, *Répertoire*, 62.

[130] ܒܢܝ, lit. "built," for ܒܢܝܬ as translated above; see also Raabe, *Geschichte*, 52 n. 5.

[131] Sister of King Arṭaban of Ctesiphon.

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I am about to bring many people to the knowledge of the truth through you!" Immediately he stood up from his prayer position and went into the presence of Qunnī, along with the people who were sent by the king with him. As soon as the blessed one saw Qunnī and anointed her with the blessed oil, every ailment that she had departed from her—people thought that her brother had sent her a skilled physician! She was filled with joy at the sight of the blessed one, and all the people who resided with her were joyful that they were worthy of being healed from their infirmities by the blessed Mār Mārī.

**29** As for Qunnī, after she became aware that she had obtained healing of her body, she wrote a letter to her brother in great joy. Thus she wrote: "One among the powerful men belonging to your majesty was sent. All the sicknesses and scars of my body were healed. And now I am free of all the infirmities on account of which I was tormented and felt ashamed all the time. I beg you to write and let me know all that is in your mind." When the letter reached King Arṭaban, he received it with great joy and wrote to her as follows: "Since you have obtained your health and received the healing of your sicknesses, come with that man of God to me, so that I can fulfill my promises toward him through deeds, so that he can be honored by me and by all the people of my palace."

When Qunnī received this request, she prepared horses to carry the holy one and all those who were with him, planning to depart to her brother on the morning of the following day. During the same night, our Lord Jesus Christ appeared to the holy one in a vision and thus said to him: "Do not let Qunnī and her whole people leave this place, for the place is about to grow great and glorious, to become a city dense with inhabitants, and my holy name shall be exalted in it. Behold! I order you and warn you!" After he woke up from the divine vision, Mār Mārī went to Qunnī and informed her of the order, which he received from God, namely, that she—Qunnī—must not leave the place. She obeyed God's order given through the intermediary of the Apostle Mār Mārī and did not depart. She then received the holy baptism, along with all who were with her, in the same place where they were residing. Then she spoke and said to the Apostle: "What do you want me to do for you on account of all the good things that you have granted me?" He said to her: "Build for me somewhere a church for the Living God." When he had just passed the place where Qunnī used

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to live, he found on the bank of the river a place called the Temple of Ester-the-Idol,[132] the goddess for whom Qunnī and those who were with her used to offer slaughtered animals. He wanted to build there a temple for Almighty God, for three reasons: one, to uproot the pagan temple from its foundation; two, to change the river's bed; and three, since he learned from the vision that people would increase in number there, to build a temple for them where they live.

What then? As he wished, thus was done. First, he demolished the temple, then ordered that the transfer of the river from this side to the other side be done—we have truly witnessed this matter and did not receive it orally from someone. Afterwards, the blessed one asked, and as he wished, a temple for God was built near the Tigris for his sake. Because of the humidity and moisture in the terrain, it was built with great difficulty. His commemoration in it is carried on up until now, and for this reason the church of Dūr-Qunnī is counted with the church of Kokhe—for the holy one himself built it.

**30** After he converted Seleucia and built before anything else a church in the land of Kokhe, he then crossed over to the region of the two Zāb rivers,[133] converting many people. He went into a village on the bank of the Tigris and instructed a man in the faith—chief of the village named Wartan. The village was named after him: Wartan-Qard. His family, friends and companions, and many among the Jews were instructed in the faith. Mār Mārī built churches in it and established in them priests and deacons. He then came down to a region called Shafla.[134] After many years of going around Bēth-Arāmāyē, where he brought to the Christian faith many among the Jews and the pagans, he departed from

[132] Ester is none other than Ishtar, the great goddess of love and war worshiped in Mesopotamia throughout millennia. She was known under this and many other similar names, including Astarte.

[133] Not the two Zāb rivers in the north of Mesopotamia but the two canals bearing the same names in Babylonia; see note 126.

[134] ܫܦܠܐ : It should be read Šeflā, "lowland." The term must refer to the region near the mouth of the Arabian Gulf, since the *Liber Turris* claims that Mār Mārī went to the city of ʾUbulla, where he founded a church. ʾUbulla in turn was located on the Tigris where old Baṣrah was later built; see the appendix, p. 87.

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there for the region of Kashkar.[135] The blessed Mār Mārī previously went to Kashkar, when he first arrived in Bēth-Arāmāyē and realized that Seleucia would not open its door so that he could teach its inhabitants a lesson in the fear of God. Its people were wise and intelligent, and, as soon as they heard the true message from him, they accepted it and welcomed it ardently. The people of this place were more diligent than the others in every instruction and assessed everything with sincere scrutiny. Henceforth, many accompanied him, saying: "Instruct in the faith the city of Kashkar, where a demon in the likeness of an eagle is worshiped and (where) a standard stands, on which[136] there is an idol named Nishar."[137] He converted many people thanks to the miracles that he performed. Even the priest of that idol was instructed in the faith and was baptized, and because of him, most of the city came to the fear of God. He built there a church and went around the entire region of Kashkar instructing, building churches in which he established priests, and consolidating them in the instruction of the fear of God.

[135] Arab. Kaskar, the town was located southeast of Babylonia, near the medieval city of Wāsiṭ built by al-Ḥajjāj on the east bank of the Tigris. This was the place where Shapur I had settled Greek deportees in the mid-third century. An ancient Christian center, Kashkar became a bishopric under the jurisdiction of the patriarchal see of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, in the Synod of 410. Afterwards, Kashkar was ranked first of all other bishopric sees in the patriarchal province: "The bishop of Kashkar is included in the jurisdiction of the Metropolitan: he is his right hand and auxiliary; he administers his diocese after he died"; Chabot, *Synodicon*, 33 (Syr.). Bishops are attested in Kashkar since the early fourth century, some of them martyred under the Sassanians. By the middle of the twelfth century, Kashkar seems to have ceased to exist as a bishopric see, as names of bishops are no more attested in literary sources; Fiey, *Répertoire*, 102–3.

[136] ܚܠܡܐ, "a young man," must have been a misreading of ܥܠܘܗܝ ܡܠܐ, "upon it," or the like, as suggested by Raabe, *Geschichte*, 56 n. 7.

[137] ܢܫܪ : This form derives from ܢܫܪܐ, "eagle," encountered earlier. In the *Teaching of Addai,* the Arabs are said to have worshiped the eagle. Neither this claim nor the statement that the eagle was worshiped in Kashkar is far-fetched. Nishra was an important deity in Hatra before and during the early Christian era. Theodore bar Koni went so far as to say that it was a king of Hatra who introduced the cult of the eagle in Kashkar by erecting its statue brought from Qin-nishrīn (lit. "the eagles' nest"); Addai Scher, *Theodorus Bar Kōnī Liber Scholiorum* (CSCO 55/Syr 19; Louvain: Imprimerie Orientaliste: 1954), 370 (Syr.); Robert Hespel and René Draguet, *Théodore Bar Koni: Livre des scolies (recension de Séert)* I. *Mimré* 1–4 (CSCO 431/Syr 187; Louvain: Peeters, 1981), 5.27, 304 (trans.).

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The conversion of Kashkar preceded the conversion of Seleucia and Bēth-Arāmāyē, because tradition holds that the bishopric see of this place was older than all the other sees. Because Kashkar had been already converted, the disciples of the blessed Mār Mārī accompanied him from there to Seleucia, and after he converted both, he went down to the regions of Qunnī, the two Zābs,[138] and all of Shafla.

**31** After he converted all these regions, building churches in them and establishing priests and deacons in these, he moved to the region of Maishan,[139] where he endured great difficulties and hard work. Though he worked very hard through Christ, he bestowed little benefit, in that only a few people came forward to the fear of God. For the people of this region were particularly brutal, stupid, mundane, and fanatical in worshiping idols. As for listening to the Christian instruction, they were idler than any other people. When he realized that he was of no further use there, he left his disciple Daniel to visit and consolidate the few people whom he instructed in the faith.

The holy one, along with the priest Anasimos who came with him from Edessa, Papa, Job, Malkīshōʿ, and the rest of the disciples who followed him, departed to the region of Bēth-Huzāyē[140] and Bēth-Parsāyē.[141] At that time Bēth-Huzāyē did not have too

[138] As previously noted, these are the two canals in Babylonia.

[139] Maishan is the Mesene of the classical sources. The chief city of Maishan was Perath Maishan, beside which the Arabs built Baṣrah in 638, where the village of Zubayr is now found. Perath Maishan was a Metropolitan see, administering several bishopric centers, including Karkha d-Maishan. Numerous bishops are known by name, the first of whom was the martyr David (310). The other bishops are listed in Chabot, *Synodicon*, 675. The last reference to the Metropolitan of Baṣrah dates to 1316; Fiey, *Répertoire*, 59–61.

[140] ܒܝܬ ܚܘܙܝܐ: Khuzistan and ancient Elam, to the northeast of the Arabian Gulf, the center of which was Bēth-Laphat (see below).

[141] ܒܝܬ ܦܪܣܝܐ : Persia proper, to the east of the Arabian Gulf and to the south of Khuzistan. Its chief city was Rew-Ardashir, located to the south of the Ṭab River, which separated Persia from Khuzistan. Rew-Ardashir, also known as Iranshahr in Syriac sources, was a bishopric see in 410, and in 415 she was made a Metropolitan see by the Catholicos Yahbalāhā I (415–420); see Jean-Maurice Fiey, "Diocèses syriens orientaux du Golfe Persique," in *Communautés syriaques en Iran et Iraq des origines à 1552* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1979), II; repr. from *Mémorial Mgr Gabriel Khoury-Sarkis* (1969). Rival of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, the see of Rew-Ardashir threatened to separate on several occasions at least until the mid-seventh century. The last mention of a local Metropoli-

ܒ ܟܝܗܕܐ ܕܥܕ ܫܠܫ ܠ ܟܠܟ. ܟܬܒܐ ܟܬܝܒ
ܒܬܐ ܟܬܒܬܟ. ܟܟ ܒ ܡܢ ܐܠܗ ܠܟ ܕܢܚܠ ܡܠܟܘ ܘ

many cities and villages, except for Susa,[142] Shaushtara,[143] and some small villages. Karkha[144] and Bēth-Laphat[145] were not yet

tan dates to 1139; the see must have continued to exist until at least 1190; Fiey, *Répertoire*, 124–35.

[142] Shush in Syriac sources, it was located to the southwest of present-day Iran. Cuneiform sources call it Susa and describe it as the capital of Elam since Akkadian times. The city was rebuilt by Shapur I in 260 and settled with captives taken away from Sinjar, Bosra, Ṭuwana, and Amida. Miles, the city's first bishop, who could not convert it, ended his life as a martyr in 340. His successors are attested in the Synods between 410 and 628. Other names are attested until the year 1281; Jean-Maurice Fiey, "L'Élam, la première des métropoles ecclésiastiques syriennes orientales (suite)," *Parole de l'Orient* 1 (1970): 140–45; *Répertoire*, 136–37.

[143] Shaushtar in Persian, Sostrate and Sostra of Pliny the Elder, *Nat.* 6.136, 12.78, and Tuster in Arab., a city on the bank of Dujayl, 96 km to the north of al-Ahwaz. Shaushtara was a bishopric see, third in rank, under the jurisdiction of the Metropolitan see of Gundishapur. A local priest, Hurmizd by name, was the victim of an anti-Christian persecution launched by Shapur II in 341. The first bishop of the city is mentioned in the Acts of the Synod of 410, and the names of his successors are mostly known from the same source. Its last bishop, Solomon, lived around 900, though the city as a bishopric see survived at least until the beginning of the eleventh century; Fiey, "L'Élam," 134–35; *Répertoire*, 133.

[144] Karkha (also Karkha d-Ledan or Karkha d-Redan; see below) was located on the Karun River, to the north of Susa, near the ruins called Iwan-I Karkh. Shapur II founded the city for the deportees whom he brought from Byzantine Syria, Armenia, and elsewhere. Ghirshman, who excavated the site, was struck by the fact that the city's plan looked like a Roman camp; Roman Ghirshman, *Iran from the Earliest Times to the Islamic Conquest* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1951), 320. The city was once a royal residence, martyrdom scene under Shapur II (309–379), and a bishopric see under the jurisdiction of Gundishapur. First mentioned in the Synod of Mār Isaac in 410, its bishops are attested since the first quarter of the fourth century. In 900 the see was united with that of Susa, after its destruction; Fiey, *Répertoire*, 99–100.

[145] Bēth-Laphat (also called Gundishapur, lit. "The better Antioch of Shapur") was the chief city of Bēth-Huzāyē, located between Susa and Shaushtara. Antiochene prisoners of war, deported by Shapur I from Antioch after the middle of the third century, built Gundishapur as their own residence. Since the early fifth century Bēth-Laphat served as a Metropolitan see, the second after Seleucia-Ctesiphon; it included under its jurisdiction Shaushtara, Karkha d-Ledan, and Susa. Its first bishop, Demetrius, was a deportee, as was probably the case of his successor Ardaq, who lived around 260. Gundishapur is attested as a Metropolitan see around 310. Several local bishops known by name were martyred in 341 under Shapur II. A long list of Metropolitans, though not complete, is attested up until the end of the fourteenth century. The famous family of physicians, the Bokhtīshōᶜ, was native of and lived in Gundishapur;

32 ܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܡܪܝ ܡܪܝ ܠܬܠܡܝܕܗ ܘܠܟܠ ܚܕ ܡܢܗܘܢ ܕܢܫܕܪ ܠܗ ܠܡܪ
ܡܢ ܕܒܥܐ ܐܢ ܒܥܐ ܠܟ ܡܪܝ ܡܪܝ ܕܐܬܝ ܠܟ ܠܡܫܕܪ ܠܗ ܠܡܪ
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built. On the location of Karkha a village once stood, called Redan, and when Karkha was built, it acquired its name, Karkha of Redan—it is called nowadays Ledan. Bē(th)-Laphat was a village named Bel-abad, but after it was rebuilt it acquired its name. Huzian tradespeople resided in these cities as is also the case now, and there are also tradesmen in Bēth-Parsāyē. Because of their profession, tradesmen from both regions went to the West, where the blessed Addai the Apostle instructed them in the fear of God. After these Huzian and Persian believers came down from the West, they instructed many people in the faith in those territories. From that time, the Church of Bēth-Huzāyē and of Bēth-Parsāyē was founded. When the blessed Mār Mārī reached the region of Bēth-Huzāyē, upon seeing the believers and listening to the instruction of the Persians, he was filled with much joy, for he found a few grains of wheat between the tares. Thus he went around those regions, instructing many in the faith.

**32** Afterwards he descended to the lower territories, where he detected the traces of Saint Thomas the Apostle[146] and brought many people to our Lord. He also let one of his disciples named Job stay in those territories so that he could labor for their sake on his behalf. As for the blessed apostle, he returned with his companions and went up to Bēth-Arāmāyē, Seleucia, and Ctesiphon. He went around all the eastern territories, visiting the disciples and increasing their former numbers, where the Evil could not molest and Satan could not harass. He used to rejoice seeing those who never knew God now praising God in his church every day, and those who frequently used to slaughter their children in sacrifice to the demons now surrendering themselves to the true God.

Praise to you, Jesus, power that cannot be overpowered, for it was through simple and uneducated people that you filled the earth with the knowledge of the truth! Who could say to the East, mother of magic and astrology,[147] that it would bend its knees in worship of the Living and True God? Who could say to the sons of powerful Nimrod, that instead of an adversary tower that they built against God, they would offer him the fruits of love and thanksgiving, acknowledging him as the true Creator? These

Fiey, *Répertoire,* 83–85.

[146] The reference is to the regions said to have been visited by St. Thomas, according to Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.1.

[147] ܟܠܕܘܬܐ, lit. "Chaldeanism, Chaldean knowledge," that is, astrology.

ܗܘܝ ܕܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܡܪܝ ܥܡ ܟܠ ܐܢܫ ܕܐܬܐ ܠܥܠܡ ܒܗ ܐܝ ܠܐ ܐܬܐ ܠܗ ܠܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܐܬܐ ܠܗ

things were never witnessed prior to your epiphany, O Christ! No Lord! Prior to your transfiguration in the universe!

**33** The blessed one circulated through the territories of the East for many years, consecrating churches and harmonizing them. He also appointed a person who would be a leader of the church of Kokhe and who would stand at the head of the bishops of the East, for in terms of spiritual instruction, she is the oldest. After many years during which he was engaged in instruction and absorbed by virtuous deeds with the fear of God, he left the cities of Seleucia and Ctesiphon in which he lived during that time and arrived at the church that was built in Dūrā-d-Qunnī for him. He called upon his disciple Papa[148] before the entire church and appointed him leader in his stead. While people, young and old, were assembled around the blessed Mār Mārī, he spoke and said to them: "As you saw with your own eyes, as I instructed you, and as I conducted myself with you, you too must conduct yourselves among each other accordingly. And as my colleagues the apostles conducted themselves according to the rites and rules that were set for the disciples in Jerusalem, you too must conduct yourselves according to them. Do not turn away from them, neither to the right nor to the left. Take care to practice unity among yourselves, and may you watch over it with fear and awe. May you keep up the time of prayer continuously. Do not be friends of the crucifiers, lest you be answerable along with them[149] for the blood for our Lord Jesus Christ."

Papa and his colleagues answered and said to him: "Christ who sent you to us is witness: you have taught us the true faith in which we live, and as we heard from you thus we will do!" After these events the blessed Mār Mārī left this world, departing to the eternal life. His holy body was deposited and buried in the church, which he himself built and completed in Dūr-Qunnī, before the sanctuary, and inside which his commemoration is perpetuated to

[148] A serious anachronism, since Papa became bishop in Seleucia-Ctesiphon before the end of the third century at the earliest.

[149] ܒܗܘܢ, lit. "by them." It should be emended to ܒܗ as translated above and as is the case in the *Teaching of Addai*. This anti-Jewish statement placed in the mouth of Mār Mārī was borrowed almost verbatim from the *Teaching of Addai* (see the introduction, p. xx-xxi). Raabe, *Geschichte*, 61 n. 3, suggested reading ܬܬܒܥ ("you yourself will be claimed"), but this is not necessary.

34 ... ... ...

the end, following the order of Papa, the heir of his see. The latter too, after the honorable and distinguished Mār Mārī, established priests and leaders in the whole land of the East.

**34** As for us, my dear ones, let us honor the commemoration day of this holy apostle and hero of righteousness. We, more than all his other disciples, ought to be diligent in honoring our Father: one, because he performed wonders and miracles in our place more than in any other place, whether it is the river that he ordered to change its bed so that it may not destroy this side, or the abode that he left for us—the church that he built and completed with his holy hands. Then, and most importantly, because the saint wanted his holy bones to be deposited in this place and among us, rather than in any other place. The bone relics of this saint are for us a source of help and a symbol[150] of excellent protection. Let us worship God, saying: "Glory to you forever, my Lord, on account of your grace that cannot be described. Glory to you, my Lord, for making us worthy that the bones of this holy man be placed among us, a source full of blessings. We ask you, my Lord, through his prayer, provide, my Lord, our region and all its inhabitants with tranquility and peace. Surround it with a mighty wall—an invincible shelter, and power coming from you. Let it be more famous and glorious—I mean in faith and righteous deeds—than all the other regions and cities around it. Let the pagans and erring nations be humbled, while bending their knees before the true faith. Let the horn of the true faith found in it be elevated above all erring religions. And in it, let iniquity be humbled, truth be victorious, and the true faith grow great,[151] forever and ever, amen."

May God give power to our entire assembly, gathered for matters divine and worshiping spiritually in this holy monastery before the Tabernacle of the Pillar of Light[152]—our Father the Apostle Mār Mārī—and whose hope and reliance are supported by the Lord; (to) the entire monastic community, which adheres

[150] ܩܠܐ in B is more acceptable than ܩܠܝܐ in A and CB.

[151] ܒܝܪܐ : Raabe, *Geschichte,* 62 n. 6, wondered if this word should not be read ܩܒܝܠܐ (√ ܩܒܝ) with metathesis. The root is in fact ܒܝ (*peʿal* impf. third fem. sg.), the *ʾalap* being a vowel marker.

[152] The pillar of light is an echo of the pillar of fire that accompanied the Israelites in their journey to the promised land; see also Raabe, *Geschichte,* 63 n. 1.

ܘܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܡܪܝ ܡܪܝ ܐܠܗܐ ܕܫܡܝܐ ܘܐܪܥܐ ܐܝܟ ܕܐܡܪ ܠܝ ܐܠܗܝ ܐܢ ܐܬ ܒܥܐ ܠܡܫܕܐ ܠܡܐ ܕ

to the holy and divine scriptures, stamped with a divine stamp; to the ranks of all believers in accordance with their station, their status and their stature; (and) to the servants of his lordly will, every week of their life on earth, amen. May he make abundant for them all the means appropriate to the(ir) virtuous conduct, by blessing the food they consume and what their fields produce. May he protect them from all secret and public injuries and make them worthy of the endless blessings of the heavenly kingdom. For there they will take delight and be glorified, being at the right hand of our first leader, amen.

The story of the blessed Mār Mārī, apostle and preacher of the (whole land of the) East,[153] has ended, with the help of our Lord. Eternal glory to God, amen!

[153] Words in the brackets are in B only.

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# Appendix
# Mār Mārī in *Liber Turris*

The following Arabic text is extracted from the patriarchal list found in *Liber Turris* of Mārī son of Sulaymān (twelfth century), edited by Gismondi, *Mārī*, 3–6. The text is reproduced here with all the irregularities of the original source and possible misreadings and or typographical errors in the printed text.

مار ماري السليح صلاته تحفظ كافة المؤمنين.

احد المرسومين من السبعين عبراني بدأ بالدعوة ونصّر الناس ببابل والاهواز وسائر كور دجلة وفارس وكشكر واهل الراذانيين وكان بها رجل واسع الحال اسمه هلقانا فبنى ثلثماية وستين بيعة وعمرا وديرا ووقف عليها الوقوف وتوجه الى مدينة سليق وهي شرقي المداين وقطيسفون غربيها وهذه المدينة بناها سلوقس احد عبيد الاسكندر وقوم قالوا ان المداين من بنا سمرم ملكة بابل. وكان معه ديانوسيوس القس وصادف المجوسية بها قوية والمضيّ مع اللذات فكتب الى ادي يستعفيه منها فكتب له بالقانون يمنعه من ذلك فتلطف الى ان ردهم وكان المجوس لهم عادة عمل الفحر وكان للشبان فحر وهو دعوة يجتمع الناس فيها على وجه الدين بشرائط معينة وللاحداث والمشايخ فحر. فقصد فحر المشايخ لانهم الين عريكة واقبل نحوهم ويكلمهم باعذب لفظ فخف على قلوبهم ورئيس الفحر لحقه علة صعبة قارب منها التلف فدخل ماري واقامه \\ بالصليب فلما دخل اصحابه عليه اخبرهم بعجيب ما رأى واقرّ لماري بالالاهة فقال له ماري لست كما تظن لكني رسول خالق السما والارض والشمس والقمر وسائر المعبودات انفذني لتومنوا به وبابنه ايشوع المسيح فان آمنتُم عشتُم وتعدلوا عن عبادتكم لما لا عقل له ولا تميز وانما خلق من اجلكم. واعتل بعد ايام خليفة رئيس الفحر فشفاه وامن جميع اهله وانفتح الباب قدام القديس ولما شاهد ذلك رئيس الفحر ايقن بان الامر سماوي وقال لا يجب ان تجلس في الفحر اخيرا وبسبب الناس ما تمكنوا ان يجلسوه في الصدر ولكن تحتهم. فوقعت القرعة عليه في عمل الفحر فقالوا

اعمل الطعام ونحن نكفيك ما سواه فقال ما انا الى ذلك محتاج وكتب الى ادي رايه اعلمه ذلك والتمس منه ما يحتاج اليه فانفذ له اكثر فاتخذ الفحر وتسمع في ذاك من الالحان ما لم يعهد مثله وتسامع اهل الفحرين فحضروا ووقع في قلوب الناس انه اله وانطاع له كل احد. وعمل الايات والعجائب في بناء البيع ومن جملتها البيعة الكبيرة بالمداين وبيعة داورتا ببغداد وقت عوده الى الطيرهان ومار ابا وسّع بيعة المداين على ما هي الان. ومضى الى دور قني وكان بها امراة نبيلة جليلة اسمها قني فسارعت الى الايمان به وقبلت المعمودية واباحته ضياعها وسبب ايمانها انه ابرأها من برصها. وبنى الدير الذي دفن به وكان بيتا للنار. وصار من بعد الى كشكر واهلها عباد الوثنين بها ولما امنوا كسروهما وتلمذهم وعلمهم واسام لهم اسقفا وهو اول اسقفا اسام ولهذا صار هذا الكرسي اول الكراسي وقوم قالوا ان ترتيب الكراسي كان عند اجتماع مار ماروثا اسقف ميافارقين مع مار اسحق الجاثليق وترتيبها القوانين ومن جملتها ترتيب اسقف كشكر اول الاساقفة وناظر الكرسيّ. وانحدر مار ماري الى دسْتميسان وبلغت دعوته الى بلاد فارس وصوّر في البيع صورة السيدة واشخاص الابرار بعد شخص سيدنا لتستنير قلوب المومنين برؤيتها تاسّيا بالسيد في انفاذه المنديل الى ابجر وعليه صورته. ونقل الى الفردوس ودفن بدورقني وكانت مدته ثلثة وثلثون سنة وكان المؤمنون من \\ المجوس بالمداين يجتمعون على عمل الفحر بعد الرازين على قانون المحبة متجنبين الطريقة الذميمة وهكذا يفعل اهل الجبل. والسبب في تسمية بيعة المداين كوخي لانها كانت اكواخ لأكرة ماردنشاه رئيس اقطيسفون ولما شفى مار ماري ابنته استوهبها منه ومار ابا وسعها بمال عبد المسيح الحيري وابرهيم الجاثليق الثالث شرع في فتح قبر مار ماري فخرج عليه منه زنابير. وقبل وفاته دخل الابلة وبنى بها بيعة القدس وفيها قلاية يوحنا الديلميّ ورهبانه الى الان يسكنونها. واستناح مار ماري في سنة ثلث وتسعين وثلثمائة للاسكندر في الجمعة الثانية التي بعد سابوع السلّيحين التاسع عشر من تموز.

Mār Mārī the Apostle[1]—may his prayer protect all the believers.

He was one of the ordained among the seventy (disciples) and a Hebrew. He began his missionary work and christianized people in Babylonia, Ahwaz, and the rest of the regions along the Tigris,

[1] السليح from Syriac ܫܠܝܚܐ.

Persia, and Kashkar, as well as the people of the Rādān region, where there was a wealthy man named Halqānā. He (Halqānā) built 360 churches, convents, and monasteries, endowing them with endowments. He (Mārī) headed to the city of Seleucia, which is to the east of al-Madā'in while Ctesiphon is to its west. Seleucus, one of the servants of Alexander, built this city, and some people said that al-Madā'in was built by Samiram,[2] queen of Babylon. Dionysius the priest was with him. But he found Mazdaism and the pursuing of pleasures in it strong, so he wrote to Addai to relieve him from (the mission in) it. But he replied to him with authority, denying him that (request). So he (Mārī) conducted himself toward them (people of Seleucia) with kindness, until he converted them.

The Magians had the custom of convening an assembly,[3] a convention in which people gathered with regard to religion according to specific rules. The young had an assembly, as did the youth and the elders, but he headed for the assembly of the elders, for they were more flexible. When he met them, he spoke with them with the sweetest of words, and thus they trusted him.

Then the head of the assembly fell seriously ill and was about to die, and Mārī visited him and made him rise // by the cross. When his relatives came to him, he told them about the admirable things that he saw, even confirming the divinity of Mārī. Mārī said to him: "I am not what you think, but am the apostle of the Creator of heaven, earth, sun, moon, and all creatures. He sent me so that you may believe in him and in his Son Jesus[4] Christ, and if you believe in him, giving up your worship of what has no intelligence and understanding—things that were created for you—then you will live."

A few days after, the deputy[5] of the head of the assembly fell ill, and he healed him. All his family accepted the faith, so the door was opened for the holy man. Upon realizing these things,

[2] Samiramis of the Greek sources and Shammu-ramat of the Assyrian records. She was the mother of the Assyrian ruler Adad-narari III (810–783), and while he was still young she reigned in his stead. She left quite an impression in the minds and imagination of the Greeks, who credited her (among other achievements) with the building of Babylon. Greek authors often confused Assyria with Babylonia.

[3] فخر from Syriac ܦܘܚܪܐ from Akkadian *puḫru*.

[4] ايشوع: transliteration of Syr. ܝܫܘܥ.

[5] خليفة translating Syr. ܐܡܝ ܕܢܚܬ.

the head of the assembly thought that this was the hand of heaven and said (to Mārī): "You must not sit at the back of the assembly!" But because of the people, they could not seat him in the front of the assembly but only at the back.

(Mārī) was selected by lot to prepare the banquet, and they said to him: "Prepare the food, and we will provide you with the rest!" He replied: "I do not need anything from you!" So he wrote to Addai, informing him of this, and asked him for what he needed, and he sent him more than what was necessary. When he prepared the banquet, you could hear hymns beyond compare, in such a way that when the two other assemblies heard it, they came, and the people thought that he was a god, and all submitted to him.

He performed signs and miracles in building churches, among which were the great church of al-Madāʾin[6] and the church of Dāwertā[7] in Baghdad, after he returned to Ṭirhan.[8] Mār Ābā[9] expanded the church of al-Madāʾin to the way it is now. And he went to Dūr-Qunnī, and in it there was a noble and venerable woman named Qunnī; she quickly had faith in him and accepted baptism, giving up her estates for him. The reason behind her faith is that he healed her from her leprosy. He built the monastery in which he was buried and which had formerly been a fire temple. He went then to Kashkar, the people of which worshiped two idols. But after they accepted the faith they shattered both of them, so he instructed them and baptized them and ordained for them a bishop. The latter was the first bishop that he ever made, and for this reason the see became the first among the (bishopric) sees—some people said that the ranking of sees took place when Mār Mārūthā, bishop of Maipharqin,[10] met with Mār Isaac the

[6] Name referring to the royal cities, including Ctesiphon and Kokhe, though the term is not always clear.

[7] Also called Dartā دارتا as in al-Masʿūdī IV, 408 (misspelled دارنا), where it is said that Caliph al-Mustakfī-bi-Allāh (944–945) hid himself "in the church of the Christians called Dartā, on the west side (of the Tigris)" in Baghdad. In *Mārī* 104, "the priest of Dartā" is mentioned during the time of the Catholicos ʿAbd-Ishoʿ I (d. 986), and in *Ṣalībā* 98–99 the same name occurs.

[8] Land between Takrit and Samarra, attested as an East Syriac bishopric see dependent of Bēth-Garmai as early as 544; Fiey, *Répertoire*, 139–40.

[9] Mār Ābā I, patriarch (540–552) of the church of the East

[10] Also called Miapharqaṭ, or Martyropolis, city in the Jazīra to the northeast of Amida. Mārūthā was its bishop, and while he was on a diplomatic mission to Yazdgard I of Persia (399–420) he attended the first ecclesiastical

Catholicos. They both set up regulations, among which was the appointment of the bishop of Kashkar as first among the bishops and as deputy[11] of the (patriarchal) see.

Mār Mārī went down to Dast-Maysān, and his mission extended as far as the land of Persia. In the churches he depicted the image of the Lady and of the righteous persons, after the person of the Lord, so that the hearts of people might be enlightened, imitating the Lord in his sending to Abgar the *mandylion*, which bore his image. Then he was transported to paradise and was buried in Dūr-Qunnī, his tenure lasting thirty-three years. The believers among // the Magians used to gather in al-Madā'in after the Holy Eucharist to do the assembly, following the precept of love, avoiding the despicable way of conduct, and thus did the people of the mountain.[12]

The reason for calling the church of al-Madā'in Kokhe is that it was the huts of the farmers of Mardān-Shah, the chief of Ctesiphon. When Mār Mārī healed his daughter, he received it as grant from him. Mār Ābā expanded it (the church) thanks to the money of ʿAbdul-Masīḥ of Ḥīrā. Ibrahīm, the third patriarch, began to open the grave of Mār Mārī, but wasps came out of it. Before he (Mārī) died, he entered 'Ubulla,[13] and in it he built a holy church,[14] and there is in it the cell of Yūḥannā of Daylam, whose monks still occupy it. Mār Mārī died[15] in the year 393 of Alexander,[16] the second Friday after the (liturgical) week[17] devoted to the apostles,[18] the nineteenth of Tammūz (July).

Synod in Ctesiphon, which was presided over by Mār Isaac in 410.

[11] ناظر الكرسي: technical term from Syriac ܢܛܘܪ ܟܘܪܣܝܐ.

[12] الجبل: The word is probably a mistake for another one that cannot be identified. The *Acts of Mār Mārī* does not mention the assembly after the Eucharist.

[13] City on the Tigris where old Baṣrah was later built; Yāqūt, *Muʿjam*, 1:77, and center of Dast-Maysān.

[14] بيعة القدس: translation of Syriac ܥܕܬܐ ܩܕܝܫܬܐ.

[15] استناح: from Syriac ܐܬܢܝܚ.

[16] A.D. 82, too early a date.

[17] سابوع: from Syriac ܫܒܘܥܐ.

[18] سليحين: from Syriac ܫܠܝܚܐ.

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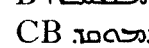
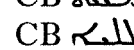
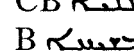
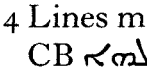
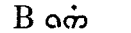
# Variants

Version (B) of the *Acts of Mār Mārī* published by Bedjan, *Acta*, was collated against version (A) published by Abbeloos, *Acta,* and the variants are listed below. The notes provided by Raabe, *Geschichte,* based on the Berlin manuscript (CB) are also incorporated in this list. The variants are of minimal importance, except for several passages missing in version (B), as explained in the introduction. Variants in the Syriac text are enclosed between two half square brackets, as in ⌜ܫܡܥ ܘܐܡܪ ܠܗ⌝, and in the case of just one variant this is followed by one half square bracket, as in ⌜ܐܬ.

| | |
|---|---|
| 2:1–2 | Introduction missing in B |
| 2:6 | B ܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܘܐܡܪ |
| 2:6 | B ܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܘܐܡܪ |
| 4:3 | B and CB ܒܪ ܡܪܝ |
| 4:6 | B ,ܡ |
| 4:11 | B ܐܡ ܕܫܠܡ |
| 6:19 | ܠܗ rightly not in B |
| 8:17 | CB ܘܐܡܪ ܠܗ |
| 8:18 | B ܘܐܡܪ |
| 8:20 | B ܐܡܪ ܘܐܡܪ |
| 8:26 | B ܐܡܪ ܠܢ |
| 10:9 | Missing in B |
| 10:9–11 | B ܐܡܪ ܘܐܡܪ ܠܗ |
| 10:10 | B ܐܡܪ ܘܐܡܪ |
| 10:16 | B ܐܡܪ ܘܐܡܪ |
| 10:22 | B ܐܡܪ ܘܐ |
| 10:23–24 | B ܥܠ ܡܠܝ ܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܘܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܘܐ |
| 12:5 | B ܐܡܪ ܠܗ |
| 14:19 | Missing in B |
| 16:3 | B ܐܡܪ |
| 18:7 | B and CB ܐܡܪ |
| 18:25 | CB ܒܐ ܕܐ |
| 22:4 | CB ܐܡܪ |
| 24:4 | B ܠܗ ܘܐܡܪ ܠܗ |
| 24:10 | B and CB ܐܡܪ |

28:3 B
28:9 B 
28:16 CB
28:23 CB
30:5 B
30:24 B
30:25 B
32:25 CB
34:1 CB
34:2 CB 
34:3 B 
42:2 CB
42:4 CB
42:7 Missing in CB
42:19 CB
44:25–26 CB
44:28–46:4 Lines missing in B
46:4 CB 
48:3 Missing in B
48:4 *idem*
48:5 *idem*
48:17 *idem*
48:20–21 *idem*
48:23–25 *idem*
48:26–27 *idem*
48:28–29 *idem*
50:1–4 *idem*
50:4–5 *idem*
50:7 *idem*
50:11 B
52:2 B
52:3 B
52:4 B
52:5 B
52:17 B
54:2 CB 
54:22 B and CB
56:3 B 
56:24 CB
56:24 B

58:5 B ܟܚܪܗܐ
58:27 B ,ܡܫܠܚܢ
60:7 B ܠܩ
60:11 B ܠܩ
60:15 Missing in B
60:18–19 Missing in B
60:26 B ܡܚܫܒ
62:15 CB ܟܢ ܟ
62:15–16 Missing in B
62:21 B ܟܫܒܚܐܢ
CB ܟܫ ܐ ̈ ̈ ̈

78:20 CB ܚܫ
80:1 B ܗܘ̈ܚܫ
80:11 B ܫܘܒܚܐ ܕܡܠܟ̈ܐ ܫܡ̈ܝܐ
80:11 B ܫܒܥ

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